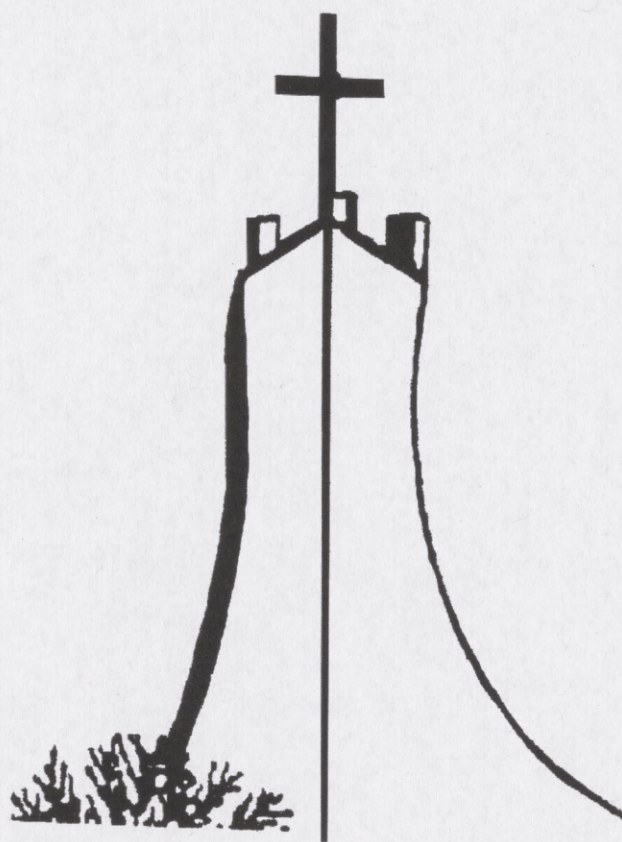


***FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
ALTADENA***

***Oral History Project
By Senior Task Force***



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INTRODUCTION

Around 2005, the Senior Task Force of First Presbyterian Church, Altadena, began an oral history project, to interview and record the personal stories of many of our Nisei members and friends, and to leave a legacy to pass along to future generations. The individual testimonies were recorded through live interviews, and then put in writing. The interviewers were: Dorothy Kirkland, Nina Lau-Branson, Betty Mikuni, Alice Okuno, and Becky Roberts.

In interviewing many of our seniors, we found a common thread, particularly amongst our Nisei...their lives as children of struggling immigrants, their internment during the war, their struggle after the war back to mainstream America, and their commitment to their own children. They are stories when taken all together, speak of a generation of Japanese Americans who are quite distinctive. These are stories of faith, of determination, of community, of sacrifice, and of loyalty to church, to family and to country.

Those interviewed and recorded in this booklet are listed below, in alphabetical order, following an overview of the first 75 years of our church history, written by Ted Tajima:

Church History – The first 75 years, from 1913 to 1988

| | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Rev. Larry Driskill | Jimmie Nishimoto |
| Elsie Hayashi | Miye Nishimoto |
| Henry Hayashi | Helen Obazawa |
| Fred Hiraoka | Ted Tajima |
| Irene Hirashiki | Frank Tanaka |
| Jim Ishii | Ruth Tanaka |
| Ruth Ishii | Sophie Toriumi |
| Rev. Nick Iyoya | Harry Tsushima |
| Rhoda Iyoya | Mae Tsushima |
| Frank Iwata | Mack Yamaguchi |
| Rev. Harriet Johnson | Kiyo Yamate |
| Miki Kumamoto | |

We hope that you enjoy these stories.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ALTADENA

Church History

(Web site editor's note: this article on church history was written in the late 1980s for the church's 75th anniversary.)

By TED TAJIMA (Editor of the *Clarion*.) In 1913, when Pasadena's center of town was Fair Oaks Avenue and Colorado Street, orange orchards and farms stretched beyond Lake Avenue, there were about 100 to 150 Japanese here, mostly young men who were students or domestic workers. There were only about 10 Japanese women here in those days.

At the time, the First Congregational Church maintained a mission, started in 1905 or 1906, which reached out to these young Japanese. The Friends Church also had a mission with a similar purpose, to offer these newcomers a night school, dormitory facilities and introduction to the teachings of Christ.

In 1913 the two missions combined and, joined by other churches, formed the Federated Missions for the expressed purpose of providing a church to serve the Japanese in the community.

The churches in the Federated Missions made spiritual, educational and financial contributions. They were the Central Christian, First Baptist, First Congregational, First Friends, and Lake Avenue Congregational and Pasadena Presbyterian churches. Their participation included providing leaders who worked in the mission and served with the Japanese leaders who came to the community for short periods of time.

The immigrants were single men, not yet settled in homes and jobs, and many of them floated from town to town. The charter members of the new church, the "Pasadena Japanese Union Church," numbered 23 and most of them were only 18 to 30 years old. Some attended Pasadena High School, then located at Los Robles Avenue and Walnut Street, diagonally across street from where the First Congregational Church is today.

In 1973, as part of our church's 60th anniversary, a plaque was placed in our sanctuary foyer, listing the charter members of our church. They were Hajime Arima, Takesuke Chigami, K. Hashimura, Nihachi Hayashida, Heizaburo Iijima, Kenzo Iijima, Ryoji Kato, Makoto Kobukata, Hitoshi Makino, Nisuke Mitsumori, Yasohachi Miyawaki, and Jiro Morita, Naonori Morita, Ryoichi Nishio, Nami Ohtomo, Yusaku Sato, Shigetaru Shiraishi, Kozo Tabuchi, Ichiro Takemura, Kuniyoshi Uchida, Kuzo Uyeda, Rokuro Watanabe and Kensaku Yatsu.

Three of these men attended that celebration 15 years ago. They were Nisuke Mitsumori, Kuniyoshi Uchida and Kensaku Yatsu. Today Mr. Yatsu is the only charter member still living. He is 104 and quite alert living in a retirement home in Seattle.

BEHIND THE STORY OF THE GROWTH OF this church is the story of many people who served patiently and faithfully on the Federated Missions Board. Parallel to their efforts were the vision and work of our pioneer Issei laymen and ministers who built a church that would serve them and their families and their neighbors, would be a legacy to their children and would serve their God.

The first home of the new church in 1913 was a two-story frame house at 139 Mary Street. That street has disappeared in the past 15 years. It was situated where the north wall of the huge Ralph M. Parsons Company now lies, near the corner of Fair Oaks Avenue and Walnut Street.

In this first home the young Japanese men of that day found a dormitory for temporary housing, an employment bureau and a place to learn English. Here, most important of all, they came in contact with the living Christian spirit in the people who opened and operated the mission.

With the growth of the mission, there came a need for more dormitory space and an extension of the work to the women and children in the families the men started. Classes in cooking, sewing and English were organized for the women. The Federated Mission in 1916 leased the Revere Hotel, then located on the southwest corner of Fair Oaks Avenue and Walnut Street. Membership in the church fluctuated throughout these early years but reached a high of 81 in 1917. The newly organized Sunday School had nine children.

The church extended ministerial and lay service to Sierra Madre, South Pasadena and Lamanda Park. Lamanda Park was the area we call East Pasadena today, east of Sierra Madre Boulevard. The combined Japanese population in those areas and Pasadena was above 100.

In 1920, the church had to vacate the Revere Hotel and purchased, with considerable help from Federated Missions, a house at 293 Kensington Place. For 45 years, this site was our church home.

IT WAS A FINANCIALLY TRYING TIME. Total membership in 1921 was only 33 and there was a swinging door of ministers. Five different men served between 1920 and 1928. Yet there must have been keen vision and wonderful faith, for the church undertook a building project, the construction of a two-story edifice with a basement for a social hall and a sanctuary with adjacent Sunday School area that could be opened to the sanctuary when additional seating was needed. In 1924, the building was completed at a cost of \$17,000. The Federated Missions Board pledged \$12,000 and church members accounted for \$5,000.

The house was moved to the back of the lot and the sanctuary building was constructed on the Kensington Place frontage. The house was the manse for whoever was serving as the minister. But it also served a number of other purposes, its parlor being a meeting place for church groups and its rooms also serving as Sunday School classrooms. Later this house was identified by a historical society as an example of the type of house built by Indiana settlers in the Pasadena area.

After World War II this venerable house was a hostel for people coming back to Pasadena from relocation camps and Eastern states, then a Sunday School building and the manse for the Rev. Jingoro Kokubun, who served as a leader for our Nichigo, or Japanese speaking congregation. It was fondly called the "Kokubun House".

The 1920's saw a growth of facilities to serve the growth in membership as more and more Issei settled with their families here. The church became more than ever a family institution with increasing attention given to serving wives and children.

In 1922, the Christmas program was attended by 165 people. A new Ford was purchased in 1923 because the Sunday School needed transportation. It was the custom up to World War II to provide transportation for Sunday School children, and some parents' autos and the church car provided a "bus" service.

THE FIRST VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL WAS OFFERED AT OUR CHURCH IN 1924. The most significant move that year, however, was the founding of the Women's Christian Association, better known as the Fujin-kai, with 25 charter members. This organization and a parallel group, the postwar Women's Association for Nisei members, would be the most productive organization in terms of service and in relating women to the church.

That year the church suffered a fire that caused damages estimated at \$2,036 to the dormitory building (behind the sanctuary).

Through the efforts of the Federated Missions Board, the city schools' Board of Education set up an English course for Japanese women. There were 242 Issei women here at the time, and Mrs. Bessie Waterhouse, an old friend of the church, taught the course. She also taught cooking and sewing. During these years the Fujin-kai also began holding annual bazaars.

In 1928, our church's membership reached 75 and Sunday School enrollment was 124. Of that number, one-half came from non-Christian families, so the church was fulfilling one of its goals, carrying the Christian message to non-Christian families.

From 1909 (while two missions were serving the Japanese) until 1928, a total of 11 ministers served our congregation. No one of them served more than three years. (The ministers who served our church are listed elsewhere in this document). In 1928, the Rev. Kengo Tajima was called from Salt Lake City to be the pastor, and he served 14 years until the evacuation of our congregation in World War II.

In 1929, the church recognized a new medium of education and purchased a 35-millimeter movie projector.

DESPITE THE DEPRESSION OF THE 1930's, our church expanded its property. The lot next to 293 Kensington Place was purchased and a house moved to it to serve as a manse and as additional Sunday School space. That house was moved to 305 Kensington Place from South Marengo Avenue, just behind the present Security Pacific National Bank building on the corner of Marengo and Colorado Boulevard.

The entire transaction incurred a debt of \$7,000 to the church, but this mortgage was paid off within ten years. Again, much credit went to the Federated Missions Board, to a hard working congregation and a community that gave its support.

Some of us may recall the efforts of young people who staged melodramas two summers in a row to raise funds and help payoff the mortgage. They were produced and directed by Delos West, a good friend with seemingly limitless knowledge and skill in music and drama and, more importantly, unflagging patience working with Nisei who had rarely exhibited thespian talent. The basement social hall of the Kensington church was transformed into the "Kensington Music Hall," and "The Drunkard" and "Tatters of Squatters Gulch" offered strong lessons in morality, heavily layered with corn.

Those benefit productions were in the latter 1930's. Back in the year 1930 the church, urged by Issei parents concerned about their sons, chartered Boy Scout Troop 41, which still thrives today. Ten charter members made up the troop.

The Sunday School numbered 200 children, the peak of its pre-World War II enrollment, in 1931. This number included the Cradle Roll, originated and conscientiously carried on by Emma B. Fuessle. A widow of a missionary, she was one of the first organizers of the Congregational Church mission back in 1905 or 1906. In 1931, the church membership, made up of Issei, was 86.

THE YP, OR YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETY, was started in 1929 and by 1936, was drawing as many as 100 to meetings. By then, there were three groups, all meeting on Sunday evenings. For some time, the pastor published a weekly mimeographed bulletin in Japanese. He laboriously cut stencils by hand. It was called the "*Shuho*" and continues today as the Japanese language page of our weekly newsletter, the "*Clarion*".

In 1935, the first English language newsletter in our church made its appearance under the guidance of Sophie Tajima, daughter of the Rev. Tajima. She later married the Rev. Donald Toriumi, our church's pastor for 31 years after World War II. The mimeographed bulletin was called the "YP Lancer" and appeared biweekly. Among staff members were present-day Pasadena residents Miki (Arnai) Kumamoto, Fumi (Matsumoto) Konagamitsu and Frank Tanaka. The mimeographer is a paragon of loyal service, Makoto Uchida, who printed the first editions of the "Lancer" 53 years ago and still prints the "Clarion" today six months of every year.

In 1936, the church's first choir was organized. Named the Dorcan Choral Society, it practiced and sang under four different directors and, on a couple of memorable occasions, participated in mass choirs numbering more than 125 voices from Japanese churches throughout Southern California.

TWO SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS BECAME apparent during the 1930's. Nisei were growing up in church responsibility, and more and more of us were taking over Sunday School teaching and supervision. The Japanese congregation as a group was also assuming greater financial responsibility in the church and lessening dependence on the Federated Missions Board. It was during this period in Issei and Nisei church members that this progress was devastated. The outbreak of World War II in 1941 and the forced evacuation of all Japanese and their dependents from the West Coast in early 1942 closed our church. With fortunate foresight, our church and the Federated Missions Board had made plans for the protection of church property and for re-building American-Japanese relations in the community. When our congregation went into exile in 1942, the Federated Missions Board assumed responsibility for the property. The church building was used for storing goods for the Japanese in our community. Much work and time was given by board members during the war years.

Under the direction of Katherine Fanning and Sarah Fields, two former missionaries to the Orient, the two houses on the property were used for American Friends hostels. The organization, Friends of the American Way, was formed by Christians in the area to work for restoration of the civil rights of Japanese Americans, and one of the steps was to put up a bulleting board with a service flag and the names of 117 Pasadena area Nisei who were serving the in the American forces during WWII.

Leaders of the Friends of American Way are remembered for keeping in touch with evacuated families and servicemen and generally conveying the feeling that there were people in the Pasadena who cared about what was happening to the Japanese residents now dispersed. The organization also collected toys and clothing for children and sent them as Christmas gifts to Gila River Relocation Center, where many of the Pasadenans were sent. Willie C. Carr, a realtor in Pasadena, kept up a steady stream of letters to servicemen. When the war ended and the Japanese returned to this area, he assisted many with housing matters and opened his house to church groups for meetings and social events.

The congregation was not moved en masse to Gila in Arizona, but the majority of the families were sent there. There our church members joined a church that included Christians from other areas relocated to Gila. During the war years many of the families relocated to Midwestern and Eastern states where they found employment and, in many instances, settled permanently. Our church's pre-war congregation was thus reduced.

THE POSTWAR PERIOD WAS A TRYING TIME. Families that had been forcibly removed from homes and placed in the rude, barren, congested clapboard barracks of hastily constructed camps and those that had relocated in the Midwest and East faced new decisions: should they stay where they had relocated, should they return to home communities where they might face animosity and not be welcome, or where should they move to if not their home communities? The Pasadena area had gained a reputation among returning Japanese as a desirable city in which to settle. The Federated Missions Board members, Friends of the American Way and other

community people who had expressed concern for the evacuated Japanese had, in their efforts, earned a warm reputation for the area.

In the postwar years this city, which had a Japanese population of about 200 families and 1,000 people before the war, absorbed a population of well over 600 families and 2,000 Japanese by the mid-1950s. Reopening a Christian work among the Japanese here at first met with some disagreement. The Congregational Church denomination wanted the Nisei to join already established churches in the community. The Issei wanted a church and, in 1945, the Rev. and Mrs. Jingoro Kokubun came here to serve them. They also wanted a church for the Nisei and Sansei, and the Nisei felt better about having their own church.

The congregation, which before the war had been a "union church" with connections to the Congregational Church denomination, decided that it wanted the Rev. Donald Toriumi for our its minister. He was then serving Christ Presbyterian Church in Hollywood. To obtain his services, it would be necessary for our congregation to decide to be Presbyterian, to sever ties with the Congregational Church and to apply to the Presbyterian Church for affiliation. All the steps were taken by August 1948 and we became the Pasadena Union Presbyterian Church. The Rev. Toriumi delivered his first sermon here September 5 and was officially installed October 10. All this was dutifully reported in the *Clarion*, the weekly bulletin initiated early that year by Donald Tanzawa and a group of young people who had rallied around the church for the community.

THIS WAS A PERIOD OF ENTHUSIASM among the Japanese in the community. Both Issei and Nisei had been uprooted from their homes by the war and evacuation, had scratched for a place they could call home, had had their loyalty as Americans tested, and had chosen the Pasadena area where they wanted to establish their homes and raise their families. The situation was ideal for the return of our church to ministering to the people and to teaching the good news of our faith. The Japanese and Japanese Americans coming to Pasadena wanted a community identity. They wanted a place where they could worship, they wanted a Sunday School for their children, and they wanted a center where they could gather and share experiences and work together for progress in resettlement. Our church provided such a place.

Once our church established a foundation with a Nisei leader assisted by an Issei minister, we grew in programs, numbers and strength. In 1953, when we celebrated our 40th anniversary, our membership reached 235 and Sunday School enrollment was 195, with an average of 150 children coming on a Sunday. The baby boom was on. Nisei families were increasing in number, more Japanese returning from relocation were choosing Pasadena and the area as the ideal place to settle, and our church's work was escalating. In 1954 we had three choirs - Issei, Nisei and children. Vacation Church School in 1955 drew 163 children for two weeks and had 74 teachers, helpers and drivers. In 1956 we remodeled the sanctuary. Two years later we purchased a manse on Winona Avenue and freed the old green manse at 305 Kensington Place to full use for Sunday School.

That year, realizing that we had to take major steps to meet the problems of an ever-growing program, our congregation kicked off a building fund drive. In 1959 earnest planning for a new church began. In 1961 the congregation approved the purchase of a site on Lincoln Avenue at Harriet Street in Altadena, our present location. It was level and three times the size of our Kensington Place property. There was a bus stop on the corner. The back property line was already fenced by Pasadena's Franklin School. And it was in the general northwest Pasadena area to which many of the families were moving. On October 15 the Building Fund was kicked off with a goal of \$222,900. In one month, half of that goal was pledged. The total goal was pledged before the end of the year. By May 1962 the property was acquired and paid for. The mortgage was burned that June at a church picnic. In October 1963 architects were selected. In March 1967 we had the ground breaking on a rainy day. The buildings were finished by autumn of that year and we began to move in before year's end. Great Day! On March 17, 1968 our new church was dedicated. Great Day again! On March 28, 1976, eight years and a few days after the day of

dedication, the new church's mortgage was burned. Over 500 donations had given to the Building Fund – families, couples, individuals, organizations, friends, near and far. Pledges in all amounts were completed. Elaborate annual bazaars had drawn tremendous community support. Our oldest member, Mrs. Kei Hiraiwa, who died after a long Christian life of 96 years, had left her estate to the church. And a countless number of people had given countless hours of time, their best ideas and thoughts, their skills and talent and energy, and their prayers to this church. They had given much; just as our first Issei members and all other members and friends over the years had given much to our church and to the glory of God.

THERE WERE MANY OTHER HIGHLIGHTS in our church's history, too many to enumerate. We would remember, however, that the Rev. Toriumi started a "God and Country" program in 1958 and, in the next 20 years, 95 Boy Scouts and two girl Explorer Scouts completed the required training. In April 1963 the congregation was proud of our pastor when the Rev. Toriumi was presented the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by Occidental College. In 1964 Masayoshi Kawashima was called to our church as assistant pastor to the Japanese-speaking congregation. On June 14 he married Hope Omuchi and on September 17 he was ordained. He served until 1972.

In the 1960s and 1970s an annual event was the bazaar, which added to the Building Fund and rallied tremendous community involvement and support. In the 1980s our Nisei, who were reaching retirement age, began to feel reluctant about continuing these demanding fund raising events. In recent years, however, Sansei assumed leadership roles and rejuvenated the Nisei, and the bazaars, now called Fall Festivals, were resumed with energy and success. One of the most dramatic examples of the Rev. Toriumi's leadership was his role in the United Presbyterian Churches' resettlement program for Southeast Asian refugees. As one of the prime movers of the Asian Presbyterian Caucus, he encouraged churches to adopt refugee families, and our church was one of the first to do so, adopting the Vietnamese family of Mr. and Mrs. Tche-Yu Wang, their two sons, two daughters and a son-in-law in 1975. Our congregation provided a home and physical, financial, emotional and moral assistance to the family. The Wangs have become independent and self-sufficient. In the past three years the congregation has helped support three young people in unusual and productive missions to foreign lands. Carolyn Iyoya was selected for the Presbyterian Global Youth Ministries Peacemaking Seminar in 1985 and traveled to the Soviet Union that summer. Richard Sahara was named a Volunteer In Mission and spent the summer of 1986 working in Thailand. Stephen Sato served as a Volunteer In Mission in 1987, also in Thailand.

IN THE PERIOD SINCE WE MOVED to our present site, we have been led by the Rev. Toriumi, who retired in 1979 after 31 years of productive leadership; the Rev. Leonard Osbrink, who served a trying three and a half years; and the Rev. Nicholas Iyoya, who accepted our call and came here in June 1983. Mariko Yanagihara came to us as an assistant to the pastor in 1985 and was named Associate Pastor in 1986. She was ordained that year, the first Japanese American woman to be ordained a minister in the Presbyterian church of America. In 1974 our membership had reached 637.

Today, however, we are reduced in active membership and attendance. We have been victims of demographics. Because of immigration patterns forced on Asians, our Issei came to the United States before 1922 and few Japanese migrated here until the 1950s. As a result, we have unusual highs and lows in the Nikkei population. Most of the Nisei are in their 60s and older. Most of the Sansei are in their 30s and 40s. The Yonsei, or fourth generation, are still being born. Those already born are in pre-school and elementary school. So, we have gaps in school agers (sic) and college agers (sic) and between the Sansei and the Nisei. Our Issei membership is very small. Our Nisei are getting on in years. Many of our Sansei have moved to other areas or are attending other churches. We are now vigorously developing a young family program and our Sunday School on the Yonsei level.

Our church's 75 years are a fascinating story of devotion on the part of turn-of-the-century Caucasians who founded missions and of young Issei who accepted this outreach, and with conviction developed the missions into a church. It is our story of how we were uprooted from our homes and our church by World War II and forced to maintain family lives, find employment, and uphold our loyalties in strange places and environments. It is a story of our return, to carry on our lives, continue our traditions, raise our families, and endeavor to maintain this mission, this ministry in our community. It is a story of how we, like all our brothers and sisters in Christ, praise the glory of God and strive to serve him through the ministry of His Church. It is a story that must and will continue.

Leaders of the Church

Rev. Shokichi Hata (1909-1912)

Rev. Tatsujiro Sawatani (1913)

Rev. M. Kohara (1914-1915)

Rev. Tsuyoshi Demura (1915-1917)

Rev. Kichisuke Suzuki (1917-1918)

Rev. Magojiro Furuya (1918)

Rev. Mitsutaro Tsuji (1919-1921)

Rev. Hidenobu Toyotome (1921-22)

Rev. Kiyoshi Tamura (1922-1925)

Rev. Junzo Nakamura (1924-1925)

Rev. Toyobei Nakazawa (1926-1928)

Rev. Kengo Tajima (1928-1944)

Rev. Jingoro Kokubun (1945-1960)

Rev. Donald Toriumi (1948-1979)

Rev. Masayoshi Kawashima, Issei Assistant Pastor (1964-1972)

Rev. Kenji Kikuchi, Issei Assistant Pastor (1974-1975)

Rev. Koichi Yamamoto, Issei Assistant (1978-1981)

Rev. Leonard Osbrink, Interim Pastor (1980-1983)

Rev. Motoharu David Seya, Nichigobu Assistant (1981-1983)

Rev. Nicholas Iyoya (1983-89)

Rev. Mariko Yanagihara, Associate Pastor (1986-1992)

Rev. Bob Holmes, Interim Pastor (1989-1991)

Rev. David Isamu Manock, Senior Pastor (1991-2000)

Rev. Harriet Johnson, Nichigo Pastor (1998-present)

Rev. Judith Rarick, Interim Pastor (2001-2004)

Rev. Keith Edwards, Senior Pastor (2004-2007)

Rev. Mark Buchanan, Senior Pastor (2009-present)

Rev. Larry Driskill

Rev. Larry Driskill

LARRY DRISKILL
FEBRUARY 24, 2005

I was baptized at age 11 in a little country church in Virginia called Diamond Hill. It was called Diamond Hill because there were diamond-looking rocks and gravel around there. I was a member of the Diamond Hill Presbyterian Church until I went to high school. I remember that I took part in the Christmas dramas. I always had a role. And since the Diamond Hill Presbyterian Church did not have a youth group, I went to the Mt. Zion Methodist Church at night. So I was active in both those churches throughout my early childhood and youth. When I came home on furlough back from Japan, I had requests to preach in both those churches.

In my early days as a youth, my mother insisted that we go to church. We had to walk about one mile to church, but she insisted that we go, and we did. And the Mt. Zion Church was about one mile in the opposite direction. But at that time, social life was built around the church. For example, I sang in both choirs and that was a social event...choir practice was the most interesting social event that we had during the week.

I think I really became a convicted Christian around age 11, around the time when I was baptized. But I remember having a great deal of doubt about this Christianity. At first, I was afraid of God. I did not understand God's love. I said, "God why do you punish us when you give us these urges and then we do something wrong?" That bothered me for a while. But finally I realized that God's love was supreme and God's grace was greater than any of His punishment. That is when I began to really enjoy church life and my personal life because I felt that God was leading me.

The first time I had been away from home, I was in my early 20s. I had to go away to the Navy because we were in the Second World War. I realized then how much Christ meant to me. I saw other guys at loose ends...alcoholism, etc...and I began to read the Bible and pray every day.

I got my Call to go to Japan around 1944 while I was still in the Navy. Germany had surrendered but we were still at war with Japan. I thought that the world was in such a big mess. I wondered what I could do to make this a better place. And God called me. I did not hear His voice, but I felt His presence. It was God leading and guiding me and telling me that if I wanted to make a better world, and I did, with whatever gifts He had given me, then go to Japan, not with guns but with a Bible. I thought that the best way would be to preach the Christian gospel so that the Japanese would have some basis for staying out of the control of the military. And while I had never met a Japanese person before, I made my decision to go to Japan and never changed my mind about that. I eventually did go to Japan as a missionary after completing my education.

I had been an aviation radio man in the Navy, and then in the V-12 officers training program. I got a good start on my college education at Penn State. I was able to finish college (BA in English) in about six more months and I graduated in 2.5 years because I worked hard and took extra courses. I then went to Yale Divinity School.

I applied then to the National Missionary Board and requested that they send me to work with Japanese churches. They said that the only Japanese churches were in California and they did not want to pay the travel expenses to go across country. When I offered to pay my own way, they said, "Well, if you want to go that bad, we will send you."

They sent me to Calvary Church in Stockton first, because their pastor had retired and they had no one. I thought that I would be better than "no one," so I became the Seminary Student Pastor for one year, working on weekends, while attending San Francisco Theological Seminary during the week days.

Then I went to Union Church in Los Angeles where I met Lillian. Lillian, inspired by one of her friends at Princeton Seminary, was also interested in becoming a missionary to Japan. She was at Union Church learning the Japanese language from the church secretary. It is interesting that Lillian grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, and I grew up in Virginia and we were less than 100 miles from each other, but where do we meet? 3000 miles across country in Little Tokyo.

The greatest time of my life was May 1949 because I graduated from college, was ordained as a Presbyterian Minister, married Lillian Cassel Driskill, and was appointed as a missionary to Japan...all in May 1949.

We went for a year of language study at Yale School of Oriental Languages and we were there for one year.

Then we took off for Japan in Feb. 1951. My son then was four months old. I was in Japan 23 years total, always in the prefecture of Osaka. I started three churches in Japan...one south of Osaka and one in the city of Osaka, and then north of the city in Senri New Town. In Senri New Town, we had to begin as a nursery school since government money was used and there is a strict separation of church and state. But we were allowed to meet on Sunday in the nursery school, like a home meeting. It was a new town so people had moved away from the old temples and shines where they grew up, and the family pressures were off, so they were free to make their own decisions...so it was a fast growing church. We started with maybe 15-20 members, and within a year, we had maybe 50, and now it is about several hundred, and out of this church, two other churches have grown. In July of this year, one church I helped with will be celebrating their 100th anniversary, and they have invited me to come. I hope that I can.

My favorite memory of Japan is baptizing a lady in her 80s. The same thing happened at Altadena. Also, I remember the first church I organized...it was like giving birth to a baby...it was such a joy to see something born that would last longer than I would. That church slowly grew and now owns its own land and building, and is self-sustaining, except for a little help from the Presbytery.

After 23 years in Japan, we retired and came home in 1974. We returned because our dads had died and our mothers were here in the States. Also, Lillian's health was poor.

We thought there was plenty of church work to do at home. After coming back, I worked for 12 years with Japanese American churches. One year at Grace Presbyterian in Long Beach, then 2 years at Christ Church in Hollywood, and then nine years with the Nichigobu in Altadena (April 1990 to 1999).

We were asked to work with Japanese-American churches after a former pastor at Christ Presbyterian was called to work with the Synod. So I became an interim pastor at Hollywood for 2 years. After that, we began to go to Altadena because it was closer, it was a Japanese church, and Lillian really enjoyed it there. Then the elders asked me if I would be the Nichigobu pastor, and I agreed, and I started this Call in April 1990.

The first two years, we had complete service in Japanese, in the Toriumi Fellowship Hall...everything in Japanese, the Bible reading, prayers, the hymns, the service. Average was about 13 persons. It was always a small group. After 2 years, we thought it was working well but the group was so small that we thought we should worship as a family church together, with translation in Japanese. So for the next seven years, I translated the English sermon into Japanese, and all the Nichigobu people had their own earphones and could sit wherever they wanted in the sanctuary. I was the translator in the back room under the clock. For a while, people complained that they could hear me, so Bill Yamamoto-san put in insulation around the door, and then it was okay.

During my time at Altadena, the two people who stand out in my mind are Nami Shingu and Taka Yamamoto. Nami could understand English, but Taka could only get about 40% of the English sermon, so the translation was very important to her. Tamiko Moriwaki was even more dependent on hearing the sermon in Japanese.

One of the most outstanding experiences that I had was a combination of Nisei and Issei. Steve Sato said that his mom was in the hospital and he had been praying for her to become a Christian. Now she wanted someone to talk to in Japanese. So I began to see her. And that was the beginning of Sato-san's commute to church and becoming a Christian.

Another who stands out in my mind is Yoshi Sata who is Nami Shingu's daughter's mother-in-law who married Yoshi Sata's son. There again, I visited her and talked with her in Japanese, and she eventually began coming to the church. I baptized her at age 83 on October 16, 1994 at the Altadena church, and at the same time, I baptized her four month old great grandson.

Another outstanding memory was when I started writing books and Betty Kiriama offered to do the computer work for me, putting my words on disc. She helped me in 3-4 books. She wouldn't take any money for this, as much as I tried to pay her, but she finally took several copies of each book instead. Ann asked me to baptize her daughter Kristen at 9 months old on July 14, 1996.

Another highlight was the Elliotts, Kenny, Louie and Kei. I baptized his wife and his children. And I remain close to the Babbins family.

My message to young people is that "You owe this church to the leadership of the Nisei and Issei." The church today is the direct result of the ongoing sacrificial work of these early Christians. When the church had to move, it was done to the credit of the work of the Nisei. You younger folk are in a noble line of service. I would also say to keep a close personal relationship to Jesus Christ, because He is the revelation of God and the best revelation we have, and He is the way to know God's love, His forgiveness, His grace. Remember Galatian 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." There will be no social class struggles, and no war between races. If we really take His word seriously, we can work on these problems and have a more peaceful world. This is not an impossible dream. With God, nothing is impossible.

Elsie Hayashi

Elsie Hayashi

ELSIE HAYASHI

My mother was one of those picture brides from Japan. She married a man she had never seen before. All the marriages then were "arranged." When she came from Japan all the brides-to-be were on the ship and they were all carrying their husband-to-be pictures. They landed at the San Francisco Port and all the grooms-to-be were waiting for them there. There were cases where an older man would borrow a younger man's picture and send it to his bride-to-be. Then girl would look at him and then at the picture...two different guys. A lot of women ran away from their husbands. But they got to America.

In Japan, my mother and father were both Buddhist. But before my mother came here to America, she heard that the U.S. was a Christian country and that if she wanted to come to America, she better be a Christian. So she gave up her Buddhism and turned to Christianity. When she got here, the first thing she did was find a Christian church. In Stockton, there was one so she started going there. She was much more excited about this than my father, but he had no choice since he had to drive her to church which was seven miles away. He had to stay with her until church was over. She was very much into the church.

So I have been a Christian all my life. Once I heard at a funeral that if you believed in Christ, you could go to heaven. That motivated me, because I didn't want to end up in that other place. And my mother was a big motivator for me. She was always "preaching" to us on the way we should be. She told me that you have to study the Bible and learn how to be a good Christian. So I tried to be the best Christian I could be. To me, that meant that we should remember that Jesus said that we should be humble, be kind, think of others more than you think about yourself, and put God in the center of your life.

I was born and raised in Stockton, California on the farm. Our farm was right along a branch of the San Joaquin River. We spent a lot of summers swimming in that river and fishing and my brother would be shooting ducks in the river. We literally lived off the land.

I had two older sisters. Then me, and then three brothers below me. The youngest was born a twin and one was stillborn. But the youngest one drowned in the river on our ranch when he was four years old. The next one that passed away was my sister just above me...she was only 27. She died in Camp Manzanar in childbirth. They gave her the wrong shot that stopped her heart. But they got the baby out and he is the same age as our oldest daughter.

When my older sisters were born, my mother went to a midwife and had the babies. When it came to me, my mother said to my father that there was no reason to go to a midwife because she knew what to do. So from me and my younger siblings, we were born at the ranch without a midwife...my mother told my father what to do in giving birth. All I can remember is when the youngest of us was born. My father said "Boil some water." So we boiled water and then when it was hot, we knocked on the bedroom door and we gave it to him. We had no clue what he did with the hot water. We never found out.

There was a small Presbyterian church in Stockton. My mother started taking us there. That is how we grew up in the church. Since we lived seven miles from town, my father had to take us to school every morning and pick us up from school. One year he had to go back to Japan because his mother was very sick. They didn't think she would be living much longer so my father said he had to go to Japan to see her before she passed away. My mother didn't drive so that meant there was no way for us to go to school unless we found a boarding place in town.

The only boarding place they had in town was at the Buddhist church...they had a dormitory there. We were put in there. For the life of me I don't remember much about that place except every night before we went to bed we had to go into that temple and what we did in there I don't remember. I was only about six years old. But I do remember in the Buddhist church they put a platter of manju on the altar. It is a Buddhist custom. And after the manju sat at the altar for a time, the teacher would then hand out that manju for us to eat. That's all I remember about going into that Buddhist temple...eating manju before we went to sleep at night.

We were in there only about a year. Then my father came back. Then we were able to live at home and go to Christian church on Sunday. There was a youth service Sunday evening. That's when most of us gathered and learned about the Bible.

It was depression time. We worked in the field or we did not eat. After my sister graduated high school my father told us that one by one, we were going to go to Japan. So my oldest sister, after she graduated, went to Japan. When she went to Japan, in the 1930s, she was expected to walk behind a man. But she was feisty and she wouldn't do that. She told this man, "I'm going to walk in the front of you." That made him so mad that he wrote to my mother saying that your daughter had no manners. But she stayed in Japan one year, learning reading and writing and then she came home. Then my next sister graduated high school. My father said, "Okay...you're going to Japan." She's the kind who would walk in the back of a man. She stayed in Japan three years. She learned flower arrangement, reading and writing, making kimono and the whole bit. Then someone from Japan wrote to her son in Boyle Heights saying that there is a girl here who would make a nice wife for your son. So he gets on the boat, goes to Japan, meets my sister and said that they wanted her for their son's wife. So she got married that way when she came home.

When I graduated high school, my father said, "Okay, you are going to Japan." I said, "Nope, I'm not going to Japan." He asked me what I was going to do. I said I wanted to go to junior college. He said that if I would not mind him, that he was not going to help me. We lived seven miles from the junior college. I couldn't walk that far. But I decided that I would get a job in town as a mother's helper, which I did and then I could walk to school. One day my father comes over. He said, "You have to come home. We have to talk about something." I asked, "What?" He said, "Never mind...we have to talk about something. Come home." Then I got suspicious and I told him that the lady asked me to do a lot of things so I can't come home right now. So he went home. The next day, I went home and asked my sister what was up. She told me that there was one of those baishakunin guys who arranges marriages wanted to look me over. I had a feeling that was what it was. My two sisters got married to guys they never saw before. And my brother married a girl from Watsonville who he had never seen before. Sometimes I tell Hank that I should have gone baishakunin. He says, "Too late now."

I met Hank just before evacuation. He was stationed at the Port of Stockton. He and two other soldiers in uniform came to our Sunday evening service. The girls got all excited to see three soldiers in uniform. I didn't pay much attention. When we went to camp, one of the girls in our church said, "Elsie, there is a soldier who wants your address." I said, "Who is that?" She said, "Henry Hayashi." I said, "Who is that?" She said, "He is one of the three soldiers who came to our church before evacuation." I asked, "What one was it?" She said, "Never mind, just give me your address." That is how it started. Here I am, 61 years later.

We were in assembly center first, and then we went to the internment center in Arkansas. I was 21. They had a Christian church and a Buddhist church there also. We were still involved with the Christian church there.

There, three other girls and I were working in the Post Office sorting mail. We had about 10 guys delivering mail to the different blocks. We had more fun reading the postcards that people would send back to their girlfriends in camp. I never spent more time reading other people's mail.

I stayed in the internment center for about one year. Then I went to Chicago. Before evacuation, I was able to finish junior college. And I had also started business college. I wanted to finish my business college, so I went to business college in Chicago. In those days you had to have a definite place to stay before they let you out of camp. There was this woman who put an ad in our camp paper saying that she would be like a house mother to girls coming out of camp. My mother wrote to her and she said she would be happy to take care of Jean and I and we could stay at her place. So we went to the WRA (War Relocation Authority) office and said that we have a place to go to, and I had been accepted by Bryant and Stratton Business College...so can I go? They said yes. But they said first thing you do when you get to Chicago, you report to the WRA Office and say we are here and this is the address where we are going to stay. When Jean and I got to Chicago we found the WRA Office and said we are here and we are going to stay at this address. They said fine.

After that, we got in the taxi and went to this address. It was near the south side of Chicago, which didn't seem like a very nice area. We went into like a boarding house place and it was 11:00 in the morning and there were a lot of men walking around in the lobby with their bathrobes on. We wondered what kind of place this was. I was born and raised on a farm and we got up at the crack of dawn and got dressed, ate breakfast, and went out in the field and helped all day. So I couldn't figure out why men were walking around in their bathrobes at 11 in the morning. We found out later that the factories were running 24 hours a day. These men were working the night shift and they were in there looking for their mail. Of course, we didn't know that then. We asked the clerk if Mrs. So-and-So was there...the Japanese woman we were supposed to stay with. He said that she stepped out. We said to tell her that Jean Nagaki and Elsie Tatsui are not staying here. We went outside and said, "We don't have much money. What are we going to do?" We stayed at the YMCA that night.

Then we went back to the WRA and said we were not going to stay where we said we were going to stay. Was there anybody looking for a mother's helper...that way I could go to school and not have to pay for room and board. They said there were plenty of places. I ended up in this doctor's family. My job was to take care of this three-year-old girl in the evenings and on weekends. That turned out well. I could go to school during the day.

One day I had this little girl outside in the front and there was another Japanese girl in the next building doing the same thing. The first thing we asked when we saw another Japanese was "where are you from?" This girl said she was from Seattle. This woman that we were supposed to stay with was also from Seattle. I asked her if she knew Mrs. So-and-So. She looked at me funny and asked me how I knew her. I told her that she had an ad in our camp paper saying she would be like a house mother for girls coming out of camp, and we went to her place but we didn't like the look of her place, so we decided not to stay there. This girl said, "For heaven's sake, stay away from that woman. She had been run out of Seattle on prostitution charges." So we knew the Good Lord was certainly watching over us.

My folks were put into camp in Arkansas. Then they went to Colorado and my girlfriend and I went to Chicago. My girlfriend went to work in an office and I finished business school in Chicago. Then I got a job in the transportation company. When I went to work, everyone

stopped working and looked at me up and down. Then later, one of the girls told me that the boss, before I was hired, told everyone that he could not find anyone to work this job, so did anyone have any objection if he hired a Japanese-American. They asked him, "What does a Japanese-American look like?" They had never seen a Japanese American before except in the caricatures...slanted eyes, horn rim glasses, buck teeth, hair sticking up. She told me that when I walked through the door, the only thing different was the color of your hair. Then, after that, they hired three more Japanese girls after me.

I don't know how many times I was stopped on the street by people asking me what I was. I did not want to say that I was Japanese-American because of the wartime, so I would try to get around their question. I would say, "I am a girl." Then, "where are you from?" "California"...because they did not know anything about evacuation." "Where did your folks come from?" Then I said that my folks came from Japan but I was born and raised in California so I am what you call a Japanese-American. They had never seen one before. We were among the early ones to go to Chicago.

Then Hank came back from the Army and he kept saying, "Let's get married." I kept saying I didn't really know him. He said, "Let's get married anyway." He twisted my arm so much, I said, "okay."

I was then in Chicago and Hank was to be sent overseas. We went to Colorado where my folks were, to get married there. We were walking around a small town called LaSalle. We saw this big beautiful Presbyterian church and I said I wanted to get married in there. We went inside and saw the janitor. The janitor said the minister was at home and gave us the address. The minister was outside his home in his jeans cutting his lawn. We told him we were from out-of-state and wanted to get married in his church. He said fine, we could practice inside. So we practiced inside his house. The day we got married, May 15, 1944, was the day after Mother's Day and there was not an orchid in the whole little town. So I still remember getting married with a little gardenia in my lapel.

That night after the wedding a friend who had been living in Denver for a while said we should go to this hotel, it was a real nice hotel. We went to spend our honeymoon night there, but all night long, we were jumping out of bed because there were fleas all over the place. In the morning we were covered with flea bites.

Next day, we took the bus half way back to my folk's farmhouse. The rest of the way we had to walk. I was carrying a suitcase with high heels and all. It was a pretty hard walk. Then we came upon this farmhouse. My folk's friends lived in that house. I told Hank, maybe if I put on a good show they might give us a ride. So usually, people are watching out of their house to see who is going down the road. I got the suitcase and I am limping and limping and sure enough, a car came along and a guy said, "You want a ride?" We got a ride back to my folk's farm.

Then we stayed in Chicago until Hank came back from the Army. We stayed there almost another year. Hank hated Chicago. When he came home from the war, before he would go out to go to work, he'd open the door, cuss the weather for five minutes before he left.

When I had the baby, after he had gone overseas, the neighbor told me that she would help me get to the hospital if it happened during the night, but during the day, she worked. Well it happened during the day. So I had to walk two blocks, catch the streetcar, go ten blocks to where the hospital was. It was hot and sultry. The bus was so crowded that I had to push my way

in. Even the aisle was jammed. I am having pains. I needed air. So I began to cry, "Ouch, ouch, Ouch, I'm having my baby." So I got my space and my air.

When we came back to California and went to the hakugin (Caucasian) church a few blocks from our house. Then Gale, our daughter, became friends with Pam Tajima (Ted's daughter). She told us about the Japanese church here in town. That's when we transferred to the Pasadena Union Church on Kensington. So we started going there. The church got moved up here to Altadena. That is where we still are.

When the church moved to Altadena, I was so happy to see the big beautiful church, because Kensington was a small church. And for one thing the Altadena church is quite closer than the other church used to be. We were amazed at how big a group of Japanese was going to that church. We didn't know anybody in Pasadena before.

Our Thursday night Bible study began about 25 years ago. One night Larry Koga, who is gone now...he was an engineer at JPL and he had brain cancer...he called and he said, "Elsie, the Lord saved me from that brain cancer and He gave me my life back. So I want to do something for the Lord. I want to start a Bible study. Would you like to come?" I said, "You know, I have often thought about a Bible study and if you are starting one, I'll come." He asked if Hank would like to come. Hank was watching TV. So I asked him. I said, "Hank, Koga is on the phone and is starting a Bible study and he wants to know if you would like to come." He doesn't answer me...just keeps on watching TV. I repeated, "Hank, he is on the phone and he wants to know if you want to come to his Bible study." He still keeps watching TV...no answer. I said again, "Hank, he is on the phone. He says that Sam Miyeda is coming." Hank said, "Oh, Sam's coming? Okay, I'll go, I'll go. If Sam's going, I'll go." So I told Larry that we would both come. That is how it started.

So then, we also had Mari and Harry Higashi. Later, we added Kiyo Ogawa, Ruth Tanaka, Fuyu Hashimoto, and then Mas Chuman and Massie Yusa. Koga was our leader and he was very knowledgeable about the Bible. We have been meeting for 25 years. The only ones left now are Kiyo, Mas, Ruth, and us two. We do a lot of activities for the church, and we read the Bible. We read out loud, each taking turns. And when we finish a chapter, we go to Home Town Buffet for dinner.

We also had refreshments. Once it was Mas' turn to bring refreshments. He came in late and the first thing we said was, "Hey, where's the refreshments?" And he turned around without saying a word and walked out the door. Then he came back later with refreshments. He knew how important refreshments are. But about two years ago, we decided not to do refreshments anymore. We just fellowship for about 45 minutes, and then we read scripture. But right now we are reading "Journey to Holiness," a book that Sam Gin gave to us.

Our group also does the cooking whenever the church has chicken teriyaki. We have been doing this year after year because it is so much fun and we enjoy doing that. Someone buys the chicken at a wholesale place. Roy McManus boils the chicken, and he knows just how long to boil it so that it is done. Ruth makes sure that the teriyaki sauce is just right. And we still use all the equipment that Sam Miyeda made when he was with us...all the equipment for the chicken teriyaki process...the boiler, the barbeque racks, the stove. Sam also made the chair racks, the security gates...a lot of things that you see at church was made by Sam.

We have three kids and each of our kids have three kids. So we have nine grandkids. We have three or four grandkids who have gotten married. They were raised at our church, and

they all turned out good. Hank said that he wanted to do something to repay the church for this, so he started taking care of the back yard. It was all weeds then, so we cleaned it up and put in a sprinkler system, grass and a garden. He has been taking care of this for over 20 years now. Now he's 90 and probably can't do this much longer, but I think he will still have a part in that garden.

I would like to say to all the young people, trust in the Lord and He will always see you through. Whatever difficulties you are getting in, the Lord is in charge.

Henry Hayashi

Henry Hayashi

HENRY HAYASHI

My folks came from Kagoshima, Japan, which is in the southern part of Japan, called Kyushu. My father came in 1900 or 1903, sometime in there. He worked on the railroad in Utah. There were a lot of Japanese doing this work. He came for adventure, I think. He was the younger of the children, and in those days, the older inherit the family property and are obligated to stay. He was the only one who ventured from Japan. After Utah, he went to Salinas...he had relatives there. Then to Los Angeles. He rented land and farmed around the Santa Anita Racetrack. I remember him talking about riding the horse wagon full of vegetables to the LA market, and then falling asleep on the way back, but the horse would always take him back home. He farmed until around 1914 and then went back to Japan.

He married my mother in Japan. They had one child there. When they came back to America, they had to leave her with the grandmother because she was too small to bring. There were a lot of cases like that. I know that they regretted all their lives having to leave her. They never saw her after that, because in 1923, they had the law that no more Japanese (or Asians) could come in. So after returning to America, they had one daughter, three sons, and twins (one boy and one girl...but the girl was killed in an auto accident).

I was born on February 15, 1916, in what is now called the garment district of Los Angeles. Both my parents were Christian. At that time we went to a Japanese Christian Church that was located down at the wholesale vegetable market area. Then, about 1928, it moved to 22nd and San Pedro where the Japanese people built the Japanese Christian Church. In the 1930-32, there was a Caucasian youth worker and his girl friend (they were married later), and they did all the activities for the young people. We had different clubs. Haru Okuda was a member of that church, and so was Naoko Saito. They had about five girls' clubs and about five boys' clubs of different ages in that church. We were one of the older groups. They called us the Anchovies. The youth leader took us everywhere when our parents were too busy making a living running a grocery store. He would take us to the High Sierras, even a trip to San Francisco, and we stayed at the Japanese YWCA. We weren't pushed into religion but we had a lot of exposure. It was take it as you go along. I think that is what held the various groups together because there were Buddhist kids in the group and we all got along together and intermingled with the "Y" clubs at that time. We also went to Japanese school on Saturdays at the church or after school.

When the war broke out, the Caucasian youth minister and his wife watched all the church members' property during relocation. During the war period, the church was taken over by Caucasians and it became All Peoples Church. Then after the war was over, the Japanese came back but they lost the church. So they built the West Adam Christian Church.

I went to John Adams Jr. High School in Los Angeles, and to Polytechnic High School on Washington and Grand. I graduated in 1934, right after that earthquake we had in 1934. Most of the Japanese at that time were in the produce business, where the parents had grocery markets. I would work at my dad's store after school. We would always go to church on Sundays. I remember when we were baptized, we were above the altar on the second floor and there was that metal tub where you got dipped.

All my friends were going to college and when they got out, they couldn't find a job, except in a fruit stand or going with the Japanese companies and working in Japan. I had quite a few friends that went that way. I decided not to go to college. I worked in a fruit stand until about 1939. Then I went up to northern California and worked on my cousin's farm to learn how to be a farmer.

I was never in a relocation camp. I had joined the military in 1941 to get my military service out of the way. This was before the war started. At that time you served one year and then you were out. That one year for me lasted 4 ½ years. At first, I was one of three Japanese in a Caucasian unit. We got along good...socialized and all. They sent me to school before the war. I went to the Presidio for three months in San Francisco. I really liked that because I could walk right into Japanese town. Then I was transferred to Stockton, and that's where me and Elsie met...she chased me all over...anyway, that's how we got started.

Then after Pearl Harbor (December 1941), I started to notice that our duties became restricted. We couldn't carry rifles anymore, and we could not go to San Francisco to haul supplies. At that time, there were lots of Japanese in the military, up and down the coastline...California, Oregon and Washington. They were all rounded up too, and segregated. They did not know what to do with us. Then around March, they sent us to different places. I went to Fort Sheridan in Chicago.

In Hawaii, there were about 1,400 Japanese in the military. They did not know what to do with them either. Then someone suggested that they form an all-Japanese unit, and these guys from Hawaii formed the 100th Battalion. They were sent to Camp McCoy for training...they were a human guinea pig. They did so well in basic training that they decided to form the 442 Regimental Combat Unit, an all-Japanese regiment. This is how the 442nd was formed.

The structure of a regiment goes like this. There are about 5,000 men in a regiment, and a regiment is made up of different units.

- The smallest unit is a "squad." A "squad" is about 14 men.
- Three squads make up a "platoon" (about 45 men)
- Three platoons make up a "company" (about 150 men) – plus a weapons platoon
- Three companies make up a "battalion" (about 450 men) – plus a heavy weapons platoon
- Three battalions make up a "regiment" (about 5,000 men)

There are also other components assigned to a regiment, like the medical detachment, the engineer company, band, cannon company, anti-tank company, a service company, and the 522nd field artillery battalion. In total, the 442nd Regimental Combat Unit had about 4,000 to 5,000 men at one time. Maybe about 15,000 altogether, since so many were wounded, killed, or missing in action, and then others had to come in to replace them. The 442nd was all Japanese, no women, except the officers were mostly Caucasian, and I remember, Colonel Kim, who was Korean.

In April 1944, the 442nd was sent to Italy and France and they suffered heavy casualties there. Also very heavy casualties in rescuing the Lost Battalion in France. I was not part of that group. But then in the latter part of 1944, that is when we got a hurry-up call for all camps training Japanese soldiers. They came to Camp Shelby in Mississippi where I was. They came from Camp Hood and Camp Blanding. Then the entire group, including me, was then sent to France. I served overseas in France, then Italy.

The 100th Battalion went overseas first. The second and third Battalion then went overseas and made a regiment triangle. The first Battalion stayed back at Camp Shelby, and I was with the first Battalion. They took all the privates out of the company and sent them to the second and third battalion, oversized, because you never know how the casualties were going to be. Then there were those who went overseas to join the 100th Battalion. After the Lost Battalion mission, because we had so many killed in action, they sent for more men to rebuild the regiment back up to strength. I was sent to France. We stayed on the border of France and Italy for about one month, patrolling. Then General Mark Clark wanted the 442nd to come to Italy. There was fierce fighting there at the time. We made the last push in Italy. The 92nd Division and some other units were stalemated at this line, just north of Leghorn. They had not been able to advance for six months. When the 442nd regiment was almost at full strength, we made the final drive from Leghorn, a port city. What they could not do in six months, the 442nd did in two days. We were trying to capture the territory north of Florence, up to the Swiss border. We did what we were told to do. Each Battalion had a certain sector to attack. One over the mountain, we took the coast side, and the third was through the center. We caught everyone by surprise. There were quite a few casualties. In my platoon, we had six die in a group of 45 men, and a lot of wounded. We did what we were told to do. We did the best that we could. Our motto was "Go for Broke." The 442nd was the most decorated unit in this war.

I think about those days. (Elsie: "He had a lot of nightmares.") A lot of us still go to PTSD (post traumatic syndrome disorder.) This PTSD treatment only took place in the last four to five years. When we got back from service, our problems were finding work, so we did not pay any attention to what had happened to us during the war. But in 1999, the VA started accepting claims for hearing loss, so that opened the door for other things. My private doctor, a Korean doctor from Hawaii who had been treating me for my hearing loss, he wrote a letter saying that I was going for hearing tests, and with that letter, they gave me a 60% hearing loss which was military related. It was activated in the year 2000, 60 years after the war. Then, in the meantime, this one fellow whose

brother was in the Korean War, he went to a Black VA administrator in Gardena. And he said that his brother was having all sorts of medical problems also, so the VA said to send him down and they would talk to him. Then the report came back and he got disability compensation. Then he mentioned about all the other veterans having medical problems, so this administrator began to talk to a lot of us Japanese veterans. So after all those years of just keeping quiet, we got a break and we became eligible for treatment and compensation.

In a way the war did a lot of good things for the young Nisei. They could not find jobs before the war and they all ended up in fruit stands. Then when the war broke out, a lot of them got out, worked in the East and in their profession. They worked so well that people wanted to hire them. They had a good reputation.

Boy Scout Troop 41 started up before the war, and they were half Buddhist and half Christian. Our son was in there. I was scoutmaster around 1961. I started them into hiking using the army methods, because I was in the army. We went up to Mt. Whitney and camped, also Idyllwild, around Redlands. We had a lot of fun and the parents all participated. Then we separated...Buddhist in one troop and Christians in another. Then the Buddhist troop folded up, and then about four years later, the Christians because the neighborhood changed. There is a plaque on the wall of the church...Eagle Scouts. None of them got into trouble. I run into them and they always call me "Mister."

I've been working in the back yard of the church for over 25 years. The reason is because our children got a good basic Christian background at this church. We did not know about this church until our daughter, Gale, got acquainted with Pam Tajima. Then we started going to the church on Kensington. Then when the church moved to Altadena, we helped to landscape the church. But in the back yard, it was just an eyesore...weeds. So some of us got together and talked about fixing that up. And my neighbor, a Mexican fellow, did concrete work. So I asked him how much it would cost to put in a concrete walkway in the back of the church, and he gave us a real good deal. Being neighbors and all, he helped us. Then a group of us got together to talk about the back yard...Tosh Kawahara, Kiyoko Ogawa, Mas Chuman, Sam Maeda. And we worked together and cleaned it up, put in a sprinkler system, then the lawn. Then later, one day when I was in Kettle's Nursery, I was talking/kidding around with the owner...he was in a good mood, I guess...and he donated all the rose bushes to the church. So this back garden and grounds began many years ago. And since then, I've just taken on the maintenance from year to year, planting flowers every season, mowing, weeding. It was pay-back time. But I have to quit now.

But we have had a lot of fun in that back yard. That's where we fix the teriyaki chicken for the church events. I remember that one day Sam Maeda, after watching Mae and Bob Uchida and others working so hard boiling chicken in aluminum pots in the kitchen and carrying it out to the lawn area to barbeque it...he told them that our group could take this over next year. And we did, year after year. Mas built a block wall lining for a fire pit in the back yard, and Sam made the equipment, boilers, to boil chicken in

large pots outside, and he made the trays and the grills to barbeque the chicken. We've been doing the teriyaki chicken each year in this way.

We use to barbeque chicken at Keiro too, as a fundraiser for them. We took all our equipment over there. We got all the food free..like the meat and the produce and one person had connections with a liquor store. We did this for about five years and we always had a good time.

I remember the mochi-tsuki (pounding mochi) in the back yard. Then we also started the breakfast for the hikers each year. Then the church breakfast on Easter. And we keep a separate breakfast for us because we got a complaint that someone didn't like the way we jazzed up the Easter breakfast. So we said, "okay...we'll cook our own separate." Now, everyone comes back to where the jazzed up stuff is...chorizo, rice, pork sausage, spam sausage, all the no-no's.

What got me into getting back into the church is what people have done for me when I was growing up and later. The youth minister who took us all over. And I once went to a Catholic church because we lived with some Italian people, and they took me to catechism in Watts once or twice a week. During the war, there was a Caucasian chaplain overseas in Europe. He would come out to see how we were when we were out on OP. That was very unusual. So those things that people have done for me have stayed with me. Those memories come back and we want to return those favors back to the church.

I remember also when I was in Camp Shelby. A friend told me that he needed \$100. So I wrote to Elsie and asked her to send me \$100 for a friend. That was a lot of money since she made \$25 per week, so that was one month's pay. But she sent it to me. At that time, before you were shipped out overseas, you were supposed to take care of all your debts because you never knew if you would come back or not. Well, he never repaid me. About three years ago, he told me, "Oh, I owe you some money." I said to forget it, and later he died. Then, there was this other fellow who came to my platoon overseas. He was a staff sergeant. He gave me \$25 and asked me to give it to Joe's parents. Joe Hayashi was my cousin and he was killed in the war. I said, "Okay" and I did. So here was a guy who I did not even know, who joins my platoon and he must have heard that I was related to Joe. But he wanted to repay Joe by giving it to his parents. He did not have to do that, but he did. This was an example of a man who I have not forgotten.

So I hope our kids do the same...stick to the Golden Rule and set a good example for others. Like in our youth, religion wasn't pushed on us, but by what the church did, I remember. It is pay back time because of the good Christian ideas that our kids have grown up with.

Fred Hiraoka

Fred Hiraoka

FRED HIRAOKA

My parents came from Iwakuni, Yamaguchi in Japan. My father's family name is Hira which means flat and Oka which means above. Both my parents were the youngest in their families. Thus, my father was not to have an inheritance. So father was adopted by a relative who had no children. Mother's mother died giving birth to her so she was raised by an older sister. Father went with the Japanese army to China for 3 years. He was not on the battlefield but was in the supply unit. I believe my father didn't like being adopted by another family so he volunteered for the army to get away. When he came to Japan back from China, the sugar plantations in HI were flourishing. So the sugar companies sent out recruiters to the Japanese countryside looking for cheap labor suited to hard agrarian work. This was about 1900. Father went to a recruiting session and he signed on for \$17/month and was shipped off to Lahaina.

He was saving money to buy property in Japan. He was not going to get an inheritance from his adoptive family because he didn't live with them and he didn't want to get property that way anyway. After working on the plantation for awhile, he started his own horse and buggy business. He learned Hawaiian and English which gave him a larger part of the customer base. He also met the woman that was to become my mother. In 1925 my father took the whole family to Japan. I was 12 years old. There was no property for sale. He couldn't buy property in HI because he wasn't a citizen. He wasn't a citizen because of the law excluding Asians.

I was born on December 30, 1913 in Lahaina. I grew up in the Japantown in Lahaina, Maui. The house was several different buildings. One was 2 bedrooms. Then there was a building with the kitchen and dining room. The furo was another area. The houses were on stilts which kept air flowing around all sides. My mom kept about 2 dozen chickens for eggs. The first baby rooster big enough to eat was the candidate for the soup pot.

When I was about 5 years old I caught the Spanish flu. I was quarantined along with many others. Several of my friends died of the flu. My father was allowed to see me but not allowed to stay. The flu was more severe in its attack of the boys. It was very lonely. When I was 7 years old I contracted meningitis. That was a time when a lot more people were coming into the area. Many carried diseases against which the local people had no immunities. Then when I was around 12 years old I had typhoid fever. I was quarantined again but still had to help the nurses take care of others. I was taught to dress wounds and care for people. The smell of the chloroform was overwhelming. I recovered from all these illnesses with no side effects.

When I was 5 years old I started kindergarten. The kids were Japanese, Hawaiian and Portuguese. No Anglo kids went to the school. All the families were small business owners. Then for 1-8 grade I went to a common school, Kamehameha III School. Kamehameha had been king of HI and had his capital in Lahaina in the late 1800's. School was provided by the government. When I started school I knew English, Japanese and Pidgin English (dialect spoken widely in HI). Many of the kids did not know standard English though many knew Pidgin English. So the first couple of grades they focused just on English and then added other subjects around 3rd grade. The instructors needed a common language to teach and communicate.

When I was in 3rd grade my teacher took us to visit a jail. She asked what the prisoners got to eat and drink. It was only a tack cracker and water once a day. I saw how poor the conditions were and decided that I did not want to ever go to jail.

When I was in grade school, our family went to Japan and we stayed for almost a year. I helped my uncle plow his fields and plant the rice. The rice paddies would have leeches which would cling to your legs. I carried a bag with salt. I would pull the leeches off my legs and put them into the bag where they would dissolve. Then we harvested and prepared the rice to be white rice. In spring I gathered mulberry leaves for my aunt for the silkworms. I could hear them chomping all day and all night. I wanted to do all these things because I wanted to experience and learn all I could.

The high school, Lahainaluna High School, only had room for 100 students per class. It was the only public boarding school in HI. It was free except for books. It had its own pig farm, etc. and was economically self sustaining. It was originally a Protestant school. You had to compete to get in. Only about 10% of my 8th grade class went to high school. The principal chose who went to high school based on their performance at the common school. I had done well and was selected. Most people were going on to jobs that didn't require high school. I didn't need to work to help support my family so I had the choice to go on. I took all the courses I could to learn as much as possible.

I was in a gang that was comprised of all Japanese kids. Each community had a gang that was ethnically based. I had been taught sumo wrestling and boxing during my childhood. My teacher told me I needed to learn how to protect myself. The gangs were for protection. They were not aggressive. We lived next to a Hawaiian area and had an alliance with the Hawaiian gang. I became the gang leader. I decided it was stupid to just fight. I wanted to improve the situation and decided to teach the gang how to play basketball. I designed a uniform and named the team Monte Carlo, MC with a gold and black design. I became sponsor, coach and manager. The first year we played we lost the championship by one point. We stayed together for 2-3 years. I also taught them card games: bridge, poker, etc. I also took corrugated tin roof, put it in a wood frame and tarred the seams and made a canoe. Shingles from the roof were the paddles. Goggles were made from castor bean pods, broken glass and sealed with wax. Old bicycle spokes were spears with razor blades at the end. The light spokes had very little resistance in the water and would move with great speed. Then we would dive and fish off the coast.

After high school I went to the mainland for school. My mother had saved all the money that I had earned and been given over the years. (I worked in the fields and then worked in the sugar mill for a year before I left for the mainland.) She gave me the money. I gave all the money to my father. My father never showed emotion but on this one occasion he had tears in his eyes. My father asked me how I would have enough money and I said I was young and would work for it.

My parents were Buddhist and took us to a Shinto church once a month. However, when I was 3-4 years old, every Saturday afternoon the Salvation Army would come to my neighborhood. As soon as we heard the drum and the strains of the band tuning up, all of us kids would run excitedly to the corner and sing with them, "Jesus Loves Me" and "Onward Christian Soldiers." I can still remember the songs. Then they would talk about Jesus but I didn't understand.

At 6 years old I started going to a Japanese school a block away at the Japanese Methodist Church. There was a school at the Buddhist church as well but it was much further away. So, since we had to walk, it was more practical to go to the Christian church Japanese school.

In middle school we moved and I also started a new school. In between home and school was a church. This church helped others and taught social skills. I went to church on Sunday mornings where they taught the New Testament. I was inspired to go so I would have a perfect row of stars on the attendance chart and because my friends went to church. I still didn't understand the Bible.

I moved schools again for high school and church was no longer convenient. So I stopped going. Then I moved to the mainland in 1933 in time for the Great Depression. I landed in Pasadena with \$50 in my pocket and the only job I could get was in produce because I was Japanese. I could see that the US would probably go to war and Japan would be on the other side. Then indeed, World War II started. The Japanese were interned.

While in camp at Manzanar, there was a labor shortage. You could get out of camp if you volunteered for agricultural work. A few men and I volunteered and harvested sugar beets. The others left because the work was so hard. The boss asked me if I was leaving too. I said that my father taught me to be true to my word so I stayed. The boss offered me other work and I ended up making \$5/day, way more than anyone could make in the camp.

Then I went back to Manzanar and had enough money so I didn't need to work in the camp right away. I wanted other work than was available in camp. I wrote letters to several broadcast stations more inland. One offered me a job. I was able to leave along with 4 others who had jobs. I was the eldest and was asked to be in charge of the group. Frances was part of the group. Frances went to Denver to work and I went to a broadcasting station in Nebraska. On one of my shifts, I was responsible for playing the "One Great Hour of Faith" by Charles Fuller. I enjoyed listening to the program. I started corresponding with Frances. She came to visit me 6 months later. I wanted to marry into a good family and figured that since her father was a pastor that this must be a good family.

Then I went to Indiana to go to college. I invited Frances to come to Indiana where I found her a job in a beauty salon. People were so unfamiliar with Asians they thought Frances was an exotic actress that came to town. We continued to get to know each other better and then decided to get married. I just took a break during my 45 minute study period and went and got married. We just went to the justice of the peace to get married because we didn't know anyone.

During these years I worked 28 hours a week and went to school full time. I studied every night from 9pm-2am. I figured because I was Japanese I had to work harder to show my value and make my way through life.

A college professor I met soon after we married invited Frances and me to church. We went and enjoyed the friendliness and the break from studying and work. We ended up attending the remainder of our time in Indiana which was about 3 years. I still didn't understand the Bible. My relationship with God was still in the air.

After the war, the Quakers helped greatly in the transition of the Japanese out of the camps. I noticed that.

After we moved to Pasadena, I worked at Beckman Instruments. They moved to Costa Mesa which was too far to commute so I got a job at Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) as an electrical engineer working on missiles and space crafts. JPL was part of the army when I first started working there and then moved to being part of NASA. I worked there until my retirement at 79 years old. One of the most memorable events was the launch of a missile where I was in the instrument room. I continued to go to church because I wanted to be around good people. But sometimes work got pretty hectic so sometimes I went and sometimes I didn't.

During the years at JPL I was a scout leader at our church. I wanted my son to grow up as a knowledgeable person. This troop, #41, was very active. It started as a joint venture with our church and the Buddhist church. All churches at that time were starting programs and social groups to get young Japanese Americans into the church. Later, the Buddhist church wanted to separate into two groups. Now, neither church has a scout troop. Our most memorable event was a 50 mile hike from Mount Wilson to Baden Powell for a merit badge. Henry Hayashi is the only fellow scout leader that is still active.

I was also on the board of the Japanese Cultural Center and active in the Japanese American Civil Liberties Union. I was active in the JACL because I had experienced racism in my attempt to buy a house in Newport Beach. I had put a deposit on the home and then was told I couldn't move in because they had decided only Caucasians could live there. The attorney who litigated it was active in the JACL. The case was won but I didn't want to live where people didn't want me. So I signed a release to let the property be sold. After that, I felt obligated to the JACL and became active. I pressed the case mainly because I wanted to make a point that I had rights like other citizens of this country.

After I retired, I reflected on my life and noted that in addition to all my childhood diseases, that I had bleeding ulcers twice, cancer twice, was in two car accidents and while in Manzanar, the person standing next to me in a line was shot to death. I realized that someone was taking care of me. So when I was about 73, 20 years ago, I decided to be baptized and dedicate myself to being a true Christian. When I was baptized, I was baptized along with my grandson, two granddaughters and my daughter-in-law. The baptism was conducted in the fellowship hall during a weekend, but not during Sunday morning worship. The room was filled with relatives and close friends. The thing that Pastor Manock said that especially stood out to me was about dedication

A few years ago I decided I wanted to learn more about the Bible as part of my dedication. I started going to adult Sunday school at 9 on Sunday mornings and have learned so much. For example, the Bible is a number of books that span several thousand years. The Old Testament is a very important part of the Bible, not just the New Testament. I see how people never saw God until Jesus came. God knew people needed to see God and so sent Jesus. There are many more things and I am having fun learning more and more.

My closing words are that it is important to have an objective or a goal and then stay focused on reaching that goal. Always keep learning and seeking to live life to the fullest.

Irene Hirashiki

Irene Hirashiki

A Heart of Gratitude As Told By Irene Hirashiki

“We also glory in tribulations,
knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;
and perseverance, character; and character, hope.
And hope does not disappoint us ... ”

The Holy Bible, Romans 5:3-5

In the countryside of Hiroshima, Japan, 16-year old Irene Hirashiki contracted tuberculosis. Irene says, “I was disappointed. I didn’t know what was going to happen to me. No one hardly talked about it; there was no discussion.” In the Japanese culture, Irene couldn’t tell anyone she had tuberculosis because it would bring *haji* to the family. So her illness was kept very hush hush. Seeing Irene’s plight, her grandfather’s brother and his wife secretly arranged for Irene to move to America.

At long last, Irene would return to her country of birth. She was born in Inglewood, California, on September 29, 1924. But more significantly, she would be reunited with her mother, who, as a young widow, had left Irene and her sister Alice in Japan with their great-grandparents so they could receive a better education. With \$500 boat fare from her mother, Irene set sail back to America on December 6, 1940. She embarked on a journey that would change the course of her life.

Tensions between Japan and the United States mounted as the second world war loomed on the horizon. Four months after her arrival in West Los Angeles, California, Irene was admitted to Olive View Sanitarium for treatment for TB. Irene was confined to bed rest for two years. To relearn the English language, she started reading the Dick, Jane, and Spot books, which she thoroughly enjoyed. A highlight of her stay was taking a sewing class while in bed. The Olive View nurses were kind and took good care of Irene.

One year later, on December 7, 1941, World War II broke out. Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor. Irene says, “I didn’t know what was going to happen, so we waited to hear.” Then in May, 1942, her mother, stepfather, and stepbrother were evacuated to the Manzanar internment camp. Irene, along with 150 Japanese-Americans on the West Coast, were transferred to Hillcrest Sanitarium. Irene stayed at Hillcrest for four and a half years. This was in place of relocating to an internment camp.

At Hillcrest, Irene continued treatment. After a year, her condition improved, and she became ambulatory and was able to get around. Hillcrest provided an excellent school

curriculum. "They offered some really nice classes and I learned a lot," reminisces Irene. Irene studied English, typing, and other subjects. She got caught up with her school credits.

Church services were held occasionally on weekends either indoors or outdoors where residents could get fresh air. The Reverend Herbert Nicholson, a Quaker minister, was one of the many pastors who visited Hillcrest. He was a frequent visitor. Through these church services, Irene was introduced to Christianity. Irene says, "I was impressed with what I was hearing. Each time I heard a sermon I liked it. I wanted to follow up and learn more about Christianity."

A couple of friends gave Irene pocket-sized New Testament Bibles. Irene recalls, "Paul, a devout Christian, had an experience of Jesus appearing at the foot of his bed while meditating. Jesus told him he'll get well. He encouraged me to not look back but to think about getting well because the same thing could happen to me. This was the first time I heard about such a thing. It gave me hope. My hope was to get well and get a high school education."

The other "friend" who gave Irene a Bible was George Hirashiki. It was here that she met her future husband. They had one thing in common: they both had TB! George shared the Lord with Irene. Hillcrest had two separate buildings: one for the men and the other for the women. There were also two dining rooms. Since there were more men than women, some of the men including George would eat at the women's dining room. When she saw George, Irene thought to herself, "There's a smart-looking man!" Irene adds, "I didn't think he'd be interested in me because my English was not good." They were casual friends until closer to the end of George's stay.

Almost well, Irene helped out as a mail clerk. She passed out the mail, asked the residents if they wanted stamps, and took care of other mail duties. She was paid \$16 per month. A favorite past time was ordering clothes from the J.C. Penney, Sears, and Montgomery Ward catalogs. The residents, many confined to their beds, eagerly awaited the arrival of these catalogs.

Finally, a year after the war ended, Irene was discharged from Hillcrest. Irene says, "I was very anxious. I wanted to get started with my education." Irene enrolled in Beverly Hills High School for two years. Irene later joined her family in West L.A., finishing her senior year at University High School. Despite all of the setbacks and obstacles of illness, language barrier, relocation to a new country, and World War II, Irene persevered and successfully completed her high school education. And through suffering and perseverance, God revealed her character.

Meanwhile, George never lost interest in Irene. They started dating and wrote letters. On weekends, he drove across town from Altadena to West L.A. to visit Irene. They were married on October 15, 1950. Irene and George had three children, a daughter and two sons. Irene became a Christian and was baptized in October, 1983, at First Presbyterian Church of Altadena. Irene and George shared a full life together for 59 years.

Irene says, "I had a strong desire to be a nurse someday so I could return the loving and gentle care I received during my early years of illness. At age 53, an opportunity arose for me to work at Keiro Nursing Home. I was very grateful that my wishes were granted and was able to serve 15-1/2 years. It was a very gratifying experience, which I will never forget."

Nor will Irene ever forget how God healed her of tuberculosis. Or of cancer. Or when she lost her son Jon to muscular dystrophy. Or of the sad experiences of her childhood. Or when she lost George at 94. Irene was taught not to bring shame or *haji* upon the family by revealing "problems" or even illnesses that could reflect badly upon her family. Recently, Irene has graciously opened the book of her life – so that others might know there is comfort and hope from God – not shame. Freedom, not guilt. Love, not condemnation. Life, not death. And hope does not disappoint us.

At age 88, Irene helps out at many church and community activities. With Caring Cooks, she prepares delicious Japanese *bentos* for the shut-ins. She helps pack 90 brown bag lunches for Meals on Wheels and includes a prayer for the recipients to receive Christ's love. Irene faithfully, quietly, and tirelessly works behind the scenes. Irene serves the Lord wholeheartedly – not out of a sense of obligation or duty – but out of genuine heartfelt gratitude for all that the Lord has done for her.

"I am grateful for my life," says Irene. "It was like a miracle all that I went through. God has been so good to me." Irene concludes, "Trials happen to our lives for a purpose. They have drawn me closer to God. Especially after George passed away, I feel the Lord's been with me every step of the way, every day. I am conscious the Holy Spirit is with me all the time. I receive great strength and comfort." For this, Irene is forever grateful.

Jim Ishii

Jim Ishii

JIM ISHII
(Interviewed 5/16/05)

I was born in San Pedro, California in 1917. My folks went to Japan for vacation when I was about a year old and came back when I was four. We lived in southern California. I went to school in Glendale.

My parents were Buddhist, both of them. They weren't devout, but they were dedicated church people. We would go to weddings or funerals at the Buddhist place, but they weren't that overly serious about it. In my childhood there was a Christian church around the corner. They would send me over there, so that I wouldn't be getting into trouble in the meantime. So for me it was more or less social. I wasn't too involved in the religious part. I had friends going to the church so I joined up with them. That was part of my social activities.

I never took religion that seriously. Even to this day, I am not, what would you say, very-religious. I look at both sides of things. There are many questions about religion. The way I feel is that if it is a good religion, it is okay. If it is a weird group, like the people who committed suicide as a group so they could jump on a comet that went by, I don't believe in that. I am still searching, trying to understand how religion got started and its background. It is still a big question mark for me. I don't think my mind is big enough to absorb what's going on in the universe.

Just before Pearl Harbor time, I was working at different jobs and going to night school. I was into different sports. In high school I was pole-vaulting on the track team and worked out on weekends at Muscle Beach. About a year before the evacuation I was into professional speed skating part-time, and I participated in a couple of professional derbies. And then the war started. Most of my team was Caucasian friends. I was out with a girl and then on the radio-- Pearl Harbor! I thought, "Oh, no! What are they doing?" I went home right away. My mother was worried. We didn't know what was going to happen after that. Then one night they started shooting at an object in the sky. All those anti-aircraft guns going off from places that you knew already were set up. So they were prepared long before Pearl Harbor to have all this equipment in place. My mother said, "Oh, it's started." We didn't know what to do. And after that they started having curfews and restrictions. We just had to go along with what was going on. Then we headed for camp from there. My family had bought the lot and the house was going to get started when all this happened. So we just had to stop everything and we lost what we had. That was the end of that. We could only think about how or what we were going to do. We just didn't know what the future was at that time. There was a never a moment of anger or anything because we were thinking about how to survive the situation and then we went on to camp.

It was at the camp, that I met Ruth. I was working for the recreation department at that time. This is an interesting part. I was working for the recreation department and they asked me to design a recreation hall and a honeymoon cottage from a couple of the barracks. I thought they were going to give me all the materials but they sent me out to

the woodpile, the scrap pile. So I collected boards to make chairs and couches and then for a cushion I used a mattress and bent it. I got the honey moon cottage down and then one or two recreation halls. I stained the beams so it looked more like a recreation hall. The funny part is that Ruth and I were the first ones married, so we were the first to use the honeymoon cottage. But of course, being in camp, we didn't get any privacy. Everybody banged on the door and we had a good time.

We didn't stay in camp very long- not even a year. I got a job in Detroit at a big orphanage. After I got there I found out it was considered one of the 10 best in the world. It was in Michigan. When I got the job there, I asked if I could bring my wife along and if she could work in the office there. That's the way it worked out. I worked there for five years, setting up programs for all the kids there. It was a nice place. It had a different concept. It wasn't like an institution. The head of the place was a lady from England. They called it Children's Village. She wanted to make it like those in England. Instead of one big building, they had cottages. Each cottage had a housemother. There were eight children in a house so it was almost like a family. And at the far end of the property, there was a school building, so from this little village they went to school. And they had a little church there, too. I would set up all the programs for recreation and then I would work part-time under a regular teacher. I didn't have the credential to be a teacher, so I would work under her. I would teach crafts and art besides coaching the baseball and basketball, that sort of thing. I stayed there for about 5 years. Then Ruth's folks said to come on back to the house. So I dropped everything and came back.

When we returned to California, we moved in on Eagle Street for a few months. We were having a hard time trying to get a job. We were struggling. Do you know about Tanomoshi? A group of friends put in so much money a month to raise capital. Among friends, I joined one of the Tanomoshi. There were 12 people. At the end of the year, I took my share of what had been accumulated during the year, and then I took my second share at the first of the year, and combined it together. I had enough money to come over here and buy a lot. Once your lot is paid for, then you can get a loan to put up a house. That's the way we finally got on our feet.

It took about three years to build up enough to buy a lot. In the meantime we were looking for a place to build. It was different from today. Now, you can't find a place to build anymore. That is how we settled into Pasadena. Ruth was raised in a Christian family. She was very good friends with Rev. Kokubun. So that's how we got started in the church. She spent most of the time involved with the church affairs. Of course, I had to be working.

After the war I started gardening. I felt gardening was pretty secure. Today you're protected. Unless you're really bad, you won't lose your job. In the old days, it wasn't like that. In those days it was almost like depression times, getting better and better. So I felt more secure in gardening because you had different clients. If you lost one, you still had the other clients and you don't starve. Then pretty soon you might pick up another job. I always kept pretty level. But if you had only one job and you lost it, you would be messed up for a while until you get another job. That's the reason I went into gardening.

Although I had some experience in gardening because I used to help a gardener on Saturdays, when I was in high school for my spending money. It was almost easy going into that work. And then after the family grew, I was in a position where I couldn't change jobs because I had responsibilities. I stayed with gardening even though before the war I was doing different kinds of work.

I felt I had security not tied to one boss. Today, even if you work for one boss, you have security. If I had known better, maybe I would have worked in civil service or something. It doesn't matter what; I still would have had enough time for some side jobs. But I didn't think of those things.

We had three children. I figured education was important. So I had all three finish college or university. They are all on their own. I have been very lucky - not rich monetary wise, but rich in family and friends. That's the most important part of life.

All my life, I always liked to paint. I had a little bit of background in art through night school. So in camp, I had a kind of adult education art class at night. I would teach whatever I knew about it. I knew just a little bit more about it than somebody who didn't know anything. So I had to keep a step ahead. There was an opening for the job outside and nobody seemed to take it. So I applied. So it was a paid job. Later, back east I was running a program for the kids. I was teaching little kids crafts and painting, things like that. I was kind of an all around man. My interest was in winter sports. By the time the war started, I was skiing already. And then I was into professional skating group. So when I went to Michigan, it came in handy. I would flood an area and make an ice pond for the kids, or take the kids on a hike to a nearby hill and come down on skis and things. So that all worked out, I had a job anyway. After I returned to Pasadena and raised my family. I retired and started painting more seriously or more consistently.

Going back a few years, when I came to Pasadena, I met the Abe's and Matsui's and they were interested in the snow sport. So we started going together to the mountains, and then in the summer time, like the Tanaka's and Sakamoto's, we would go fishing up in the Sierra's. These were the new friends we made since we've been here. That made life enjoyable. We met these people through the Kensington Church.

There was a group that was more involved than I was. Ruth was involved. I wanted to do what I could for a group like that. When the freeway came to take the Kensington church, they were looking for property. The fund raising came along. My contribution was to design their pamphlet to let people know what was going on. That was my contribution that was worthwhile, besides a little manual help. Then we got more involved in church, helping with the bazaars and things like that. We were involved, but we were not in the position to make a big contribution. We did pitch in with what we could do and we did a lot of volunteer work like planting plants and things like that.

Ruth worked at the church for quite a while - in the office. She was working when we were on Eagle Street, at a place called Plumb Tools. They manufactured tools. And then, when we built our house, the drive was pretty far. So I said, "Go help the church.

They probably need a secretary or something. Go see what you can do for them." That was how she ended up there. She worked at the church, like Alice is doing now, for Rev. Donald Toriumi, for 18 years. And then she went to work for the Japanese retirement home for a few years.

If I would say anything to the young people - the way I look at it, it is nice to have a little organization. In the old days, the Issei's couldn't speak English that well. The situation was different from today. There was prejudice and things always going on. They would always stick together. There would be "ken jin kai" and things like that. They would help each other. So with that spirit, I think like today we have cultural center, we have the Buddhist church, the Christian church. It is nice that there is a place to get together. That is socializing. But at the same time your beliefs will help. When the time comes when your soul has nowhere to turn anymore, in time of grief and so forth. The only thing you can do is pray. That is the feeling I have. The Christian idea is that there is eternal life. We have new friends in the church. We have lots of friends. The concept of eternal life is we can all be together again. That would be a wonderful thing. But at the same time, I can't say for sure that is the way it's going to be. But I hope it is. I think it is nice to have some place to get together. They get out more. I think it was hard for the Issei's to mix in with other races - except for their neighbors, they loved their neighbors. But I notice, gradually, people are getting together more. They are not just, staying among themselves.

Jim, the Artist

I don't know where my artistic talent comes from. Maybe I don't even have talent. I know I have relatives in Japan who were professional artists. My older brother was very good but he never followed up on it, even though his grammar school teacher paid the cost for him to go to Chouinard Art Institute (a top art school in Los Angeles). I had never gone to a formal art school. I had a little bit of background in art through night school. So in Camp, I had a kind of adult education art class at night. I would teach whatever I knew about it. I knew just a little bit more about it than somebody who didn't know anything. So I kept a step ahead.

After I retired, I just started painting for pleasure. I would starve if I had to earn a living in painting.

Around age 70, I joined a group who wanted to learn how to watercolor. That is how I got started. My first instructor was Ben Kudo. He was Yosemite's resident artist. They gave him a cabin to stay in while he was in Yosemite painting. Some of his paintings are stored there. He started to teach once per week at a church in San Gabriel on San Gabriel Boulevard. He got me started on watercolor. Then Mr. Kudo left us to spend more time in Yosemite. So our teacher left us and one of the students took over the group, and that went on for a few more years.

Then I was invited to join a group at Atherton (a senior residential facility) in Alhambra. They had a class there. I go now every other Friday. The teacher is John Bohnenberger, a well known artist, who is a resident at Atherton. A few outsiders like me come, but the class is mainly for the residents. I have been going there for about three years or so.

Around 1997 I joined San Gabriel Fine Arts Association. They have an art show every Fall. I have been entering my watercolors for the past seven or eight years. They have three judges who judge the paintings. I have won each year I had an entry – either first place, second place or third place. I was lucky I guess. This year I had two entries and each won second place.

I am satisfied with what I have done in my painting, but I am looking to get better. I was never a serious painter, but I do paint almost every day as a hobby. I call my style of paint “loose – going with the flow, not much detail to it.” It might take two to three hours to do a painting, but the time and work is in the preparation and thinking through the design – what I want to capture. Preparation could take two to three days.

A lot of my work goes straight to the trash can. But sometimes, when I look at something I painted, I surprise myself and think, “Did I do that?” One thing about painting, you observe more. When you are working and so busy, you don’t appreciate this earth. But when you paint, I am more conscious of objects and things and the environment, of light and color. There are so many pretty places.

Jim and Ruth Ishii have been married for 67 years, as of this writing. They have three daughters, Marilynn, Janie and Marueen.

Ruth Ishii

Ruth Ishii

RUTH ISHII
(Interviewed 5-17-05)

I was born in Brawley, a town in Imperial Valley. I was the oldest of 10 children. Actually, I wasn't the oldest, the oldest passed away. We grew up in Brawley, CA. I will always treasure the memory of how we grew up.

My father had so many children, I don't know how he kept track of all of us. But he wanted to make sure we grew up under this, well, I call it "the Issei influence." My father made sure that we went to church every Sunday. I grew up in Rev. Kokubun's church on Kensington Place. The church was then called the Union Church. We always grew up under the love and influence of our parents. I know they went through a great deal because they had to learn the language. My mother really toiled and she not only helped in the field, but she made our clothes because they couldn't afford store-bought clothes for all of us.

We had a happy childhood as far as I can remember. May Kokubun, the minister's daughter, and the Umezawa girls and I were friends. We took care of Kay, little Kay, who is now the Minister of a church in Los Angeles. Thomas and Joe were older. I had a lot of respect for them. I loved them. It was really a happy time for me. The Kokubuns were just like parents to me. There were a lot of happy memories as I was growing up.

Of course, there was a lot of suffering for my parents. The only time I suffered was when the war broke out. I had been accepted at UCLA and I was really looking forward to going to college. I went only one year to City College and that was the extent of my education as far as college was concerned. Then the war broke out. . No matter how much I wanted to go to school it was interrupted by war.

During the war, Jim and I went to work for the Methodist Children's Home Society in Michigan. I worked in the office there. We had a good time there; we were five years in Michigan. Of course, it wasn't easy to drive in the snow, but then we enjoyed it. Marilynn, our first born, was born in Detroit, Michigan. I was told by Mr. and Mrs. Rice, "No child for you because you are too small." But I said I wanted children...I had grown up with so many in the family. I had all three of my girls by Caesarian section; they were three pounds/four pounds. We tried to raise them the best we could. I made sure that my girls went to college. I have a husband that was very supportive. Marilynn, the oldest, is a pharmacist now. Jane, the second one, is an artist like her daddy. She is working for a newspaper. Maureen lives way out in Denver...we sure miss her. She has a good job and is doing well. At least I feel satisfied that they all have their college education and they all work at what they wanted to do. We did what we could.

When we moved to Pasadena, I was church secretary for many years. I was so happy when I went to Pasadena and my Sunday School teacher, Rev. and Mrs. Kokubun were there. I was really like one of their children. As church secretary, I worked with Rev. Donald Toruimi. I tried to do what I could do for Rev. Toriumi. I was Session Clerk for many, many years. I really appreciate all that he taught me. Working with him was really

a pleasure. I admire everything he did for the congregation. There are probably a lot of things that he did that I didn't know about. I admired his outlook on this congregation. He really had a lot of respect for his members. There are a lot of things that I enjoyed going to work there at the church. They didn't give me much pay but that isn't what I went there to work for. That didn't worry me because my husband was working hard. We had things to eat and we didn't have to be rich, rich money-wise.

Later, I was secretary at the Retirement Home for many years. I took the civil service test and they said I could get a job in Pasadena. They offered me a job at City Hall but I took the job at the Retirement Home. It didn't pay as much, but I was so interested in working with them. They said I would have to take all the residents' life histories, talking with the Issei's, because they said that at least I could speak some Japanese

After working at the retirement home and taking the life histories of all the retirees that were admitted (I worked there for 25 years) I really admire what they had to go through. I experienced hearing all the hardships that they went through for us. It is remarkable. They really had it rough because they had families and they wanted their children to go to college, just like my folks. They had a hard time just making a living. The Issei did a lot. Whatever they did, every Issei, I have a respect for. I really admired the way they worked hard and established themselves. Their life histories were all different, but they all went through the same struggle...trying to learn the language. My father said he went to school in Riverside, I think it was. I asked if he went to grammar school, too. Yes, he went to grammar school. Issei had the fanciest handwriting. I give them a lot of credit. They had to learn a new language. And after they were here ten years, my mother had to learn a lot. She didn't know one word of English...all of the Issei went through a lot. I really had a lot of respect for the way they got accustomed to the American way of life. They really had to learn everything.

There were many people I learned from working at the Retirement Home. I worked together with Edwin Hirota as his secretary and many others who were very active and doing what they could for the Japanese. And they all wanted to support the Issei at the Retirement Home. I learned a lot working under them.

The Nisei had to go through a lot of hardship because of the war. They, of course, were all U.S. citizens. We take flowers to the cemetery all the time because a lot of my friends that graduated went to war. I think older Nisei experienced a lot that the younger ones maybe won't have to experience. When they came back after the war, the Nisei, almost all the Nisei, had to work hard to send their children to college. I admire them because they made sure that their kids all went to upper school. The Nisei that we know all worked hard. Hopefully all the younger ones will get their education completed before they go on to work and raise their families; be sure that their kids all go to college and become established ...whatever it takes. I would like to encourage them all to go to school.

There are changes in our church. I look at the congregation now and I see us mixed. That's fine. I look at it and say, "Gee, it's nice." At least we are all together... with people that we don't know the names of but still we're worshipping the same God. This way you get along with all different groups of people. It doesn't matter if you are rich or

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poor, we're all under one God. We are all worshipping the same God, we're all singing the same hymns. I enjoy going to church, and I miss it when I don't go. There are all happy memories of church life. I am happy when Jim goes to church with me now. Before he was working hard all the time to make sure that our girls attended college and got their education.

I enjoyed singing in the choir; doing what I can. I've served as an Elder and a Deacon for many, many years. I enjoyed it. I feel that I have done what I can already. So now I just enjoy going to church. I have no regrets about who comes to the church, I think that's fine. If the church is full, we are all worshipping the same God. Even Jim comes to church with us now.

Life is short and ordinary. We have a lot of pleasant memories. The only thing...we raised the children the best we could. Marilyn, the oldest, is a pharmacist in South Pasadena. Her husband's mother is a very faithful church-goer. He, too, had been raised going to church. He went to West Los Angeles Methodist Church. They can't go to church every Sunday, but they believe in God and lead a good simple life.

Our family loves to get together. Whatever we do – picnics or whatever – everyone loves to eat. The whole family – they play cards with their young ones. We have a family golf tournament. Oh, I love that! I am always the leader because they say, "Auntie Ruth, Auntie Ruth, you have to lead the group." I don't think I am a good golfer, but I enjoy the game. I enjoy looking at all the nieces and nephews who love to play. Golf has to be an honest game. The young people have the same attitude about leading the honest life. Even if they want to curse, they know that they are not supposed to curse in front of the adults. I think it means a lot to be raised together. We tried to do what we can for the kids and maybe there was more that we could do, but ooh! We enjoyed when the grandkids came along and there are a lot of things we enjoyed. It seems like if you have a big family and you were taught to grow up together and respect each other in whatever they are doing... I think it means a lot because that is the way your children will grow up. We have a loving family and I think that is one Big Star.

Frank Iwata

Frank Iwata

The Blessing of a Father As Told By Frank Iwata

“And we know that in all things
God works for the good of those who love him,
who have been called according to his purpose.”
The Holy Bible (NIV), Romans 8:28

Growing up on a farm in Morrill, Nebraska, Frank Iwata was dubbed by his sister as “Papa’s Pet.” He was Pop’s favorite. Frank’s parents, Mitachi and Aiko Iwata, had 11 children, six daughters and five sons — George, Mary, Martha, Margaret, Frank, Mable, Maxine, Allen, Margene, Paul, and Phillip. Frank was born on January 23, 1923. He was the second oldest son and No. 5 on the rung of siblings. Pop raised cabbage, sugar beets, and Triumph red potatoes. Unlike wheat or alfalfa, raising cabbage, sugar beets, and potatoes was labor intensive and done manually by hand. Pop spent hundreds of tedious hours under the hot sun.

The Iwata farm was nestled in the North Platte Valley surrounded by hills. It was the only Japanese farm in the valley. The crops were irrigated with water that flowed from the Rocky Mountains through a canal into the valley. Young Frank and his Pop would look towards the west for clouds to come and shade them from the hot summer sun.

Pop came from Japan around 1914. He worked for Union Pacific Railroad Company as part of a “railroad section gang.” Several miles comprised a section. They would lay new railroad tracks down in sections starting from the Mexican border around New Mexico. Pop kept putting down tracks until he reached Nebraska. At that point, he’d saved enough money to buy a team of horses. That’s when he started a family and began farming. Frank says, “Back in them days, if you weren’t a citizen you couldn’t buy a farm. But Pop was able to buy a farm before the law went into effect. There were only two Japanese people who owned farms in Nebraska.” Unlike many Japanese who came to America to make their fortunes and return to Japan, Pop was here to stay.

Pop was energetic and a hardworking man. He was always experimenting with something new. He even raised 20-24 silver foxes; the coming thing for women to wear silver fox furs. Frank says, “He taught me how to work hard. He was an amazing man. He didn’t know how to farm but he did it all. My Mom taught English in Japan and Pop learned English very quickly.” Frank recalls, “He re-soled my shoes. There wasn’t enough money to buy new shoes for all of us kids. I was hard on my shoes, so Pop put taps on the toes and heels. He never bawled me out; he just fixed them. I could do anything and he wouldn’t get mad. He took care of me. He was a good Dad. I sure miss him a lot.”

Frank recalls, “Dad was a Christian and he took us to the Methodist Church when I was four or five years old. I was bashful and stayed in the car the first three or four times. But after that, I went to Sunday School every Sunday.” Frank had a faith in God all of his life. Although Pop initially made him go to Sunday School, he later went to church on his own.

Frank says, “We would sell the cabbage to the stores. Pop raised enough cabbage to trade it for groceries that we needed. We picked the cabbage and stored it in the cellar so the

cabbage won't freeze. We had a truck to haul the cabbage to the cellar. One evening we loaded the cabbage on the truck and went home for dinner. After dinner, George and I helped Pop move the truck into the cellar to unload the heads of cabbage. That's when Pop had a farming accident and died. I will never forget that night – I saw it all happen." Frank was only 13 years old. Later on, Frank told his younger sister, "You're lucky, you're the last one that got to sit on Dad's lap."

After Pop passed, Frank would walk home from school, cutting through the pastureland. Frank says, "Every day, I'd stop along the way and talk to God. Things happen when you're growing up. No one had to know about it except God and me. I'm not trying to brag or anything." Frank continues, "I would tell God what happened at school that day. I asked Him different things like he was my father. I didn't always get an answer right away but later in life you get your answer. With me, I really knew Him. God took over my father's place. And I would say the Lord's Prayer." He did this all throughout grammar and high school, all through life. Frank adds, "Everything in life has been around Him, not me, because He helped me through a lot of trials and tribulations. You feel He's with you every day. I knew He was there. Every little thing that happened – good or bad – it was because of God."

As the oldest son, George took over the farm to help Mom out. Frank had just graduated from high school and had plans to join the Navy. But when World War II broke out, George enlisted in the Army and left the farm. Being the second son, Frank was expected to run the farm. This was the Japanese duty of a son to help his parent. Because they lived in the Midwest rather than on the West Coast, Frank's family did *not* have to relocate to the Japanese internment camps, so he farmed throughout the duration of the war. Frank didn't get to do what he wanted to do – but willingly did what he had to do.

For many years, there was an emptiness, a "death" left in Frank's heart from his Pop's passing. "I wish I could have asked him questions about growing up, about life. There is so much that I wanted to know about him, what I should do." Could this be why Frank was drawn like a magnet to talking to God on the way home from school? Perhaps quiet moments with the Lord filled a deep need and gave him consolation? To share the joys and disappointments a son shares with his father? To ask why this could happen? To express sadness over being the only boy without a father, no one to root for him at after-school games? Or receive advice about girls? Or share how he looked and felt different in a Caucasian community? And what about the unthinkable – when America declared war on Japan, making headlines in the newspapers? You didn't have to be in an internment camp to experience discrimination. Facing loneliness and pain was too hard for a teenager to carry on his shoulders. Oh, how he missed his Dad!

At the end of every day, Frank would give his cares to the Lord. Frank received comfort that only God could give him. In due time, God healed the pain in his heart so he didn't have to think about Pop that much. Frank reached out – and God was more than able to hold Frank and help guide him in every situation. Although a mystery, he knew the Lord felt his deep pain and understood what he was going through.

Frank married Dorothy on November 19, 1945, moving to Denver, Colorado. In 1950, they moved to Pasadena, California, and attended the Japanese Christian Church on Kensington

(now First Presbyterian Church of Altadena). Frank has attended FPCA for 62 years. They had two children, Stanley and Cindee. He lost his wife in 2000 and his son in 1972. Frank is an intelligent man with a great sense of humor. He puts one at ease with his smile, a twinkle in his eye, and his down-to-earth manner.

At 89, Frank says, "Even though things have happened, as long as you have God on your side everything works out. I've known that God was with me since I was little. Every day of my life He helps me. All of the fruit trees – I didn't raise them, God did. When I bring bags of fruit to church, I always tell people that God raised them. I've been lucky – all of the things that happened in my life is because of God taking care of me."

Frank's words speak of God's faithfulness, His ability to bring forth life from death, to resurrect people's hearts – just as He had resurrected His son Jesus. Indeed, Frank had received a double portion of blessing -- from his earthly father and Heavenly Father, who filled in the gap. Frank's life powerfully echoes the verses from Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Rev. Nick Iyoya

NICK IYOYA

February 25, 2005

I was born in Japan, spent my childhood and the first two years of public school in Japan. Then, at the age of 10, I came to the States and have spent the rest of my time here. So I have a lot of cultural influences from Japan. In Japan I was brought up in a Buddhist family. In Japan, the Japanese the whole Japanese emphasis is husband-centered. And the Buddhist religion has a universal attitude, non-specific, not centered on relationships but on personal self-fulfillment..."one unto himself." I was a Buddhist until I went to college at the University of Denver.

My second orientation was quite different. That's when I became a Christian and it was a different experience altogether, with a completely different orientation. Towards the end of World War II, there were two things that had a profound effect on me: the Holocaust and the Atom bomb.

The Holocaust brought me the realization that our mind, our intellect, our cultural superiority are no longer primary considerations. The Holocaust was committed by Germany, a nation which was Number 1 in almost every area of human achievement: scientific, cultural, music, philosophy, intellect, etc. And yet, without God, they committed the worse kind of murder...genocide. They used all their man-made superiority to kill six million Jews. I saw photos of corpses piled up like leaves from a tree...from the death camps...that really shook my whole faith in the perfectibility of human beings. I knew that there had to be something else.

The other event was the dropping of the Atom bomb. This was the first time in history of mass slaughter committed by a nation which was known for their good will. So my whole confidence in perfectibility of the mind was complete shattered. I had no answers and I had no where to go.

Later in my life, while attending the University of Chicago for graduate work, I attended a lecture by _____ who was a professor at the Union Seminary where I later attended. His week-long lecture was on the Biblical Interpretation of History. He emphasized the idea that behind all the horizontal relationships in history, there is something that comes from above. I never realized that before. I talked with him later and told him that I had never heard this concept before and where did he get these ideas? He asked me, "Young man, have you ever read the Bible?" I said, "No." I went out and purchased the American translation of the Bible, read the first two chapters of the Old Testament, skipped the rest, and went to the New Testament. And there I met the person of Christ. I was converted right there. It was a new experience. From then on I decided to center myself on the Bible and dedicate myself to His work, and that is how I became a Christian.

After the war ended, I decided that I wanted to go back to Japan and help in the post-war reconstruction. I applied for an exit permit to Japan and waited. In the meantime, I became active in church Bible study and prayer groups at Sturge Church in San Mateo. I also started a young people's group with _____ who was at McCormick Seminary...he was the one who introduced me to Rhoda. We met in a small house in the back yard, like a clubhouse, where we had a prayer group, 5-6 people, but I found a tremendous power there that I never found in any intellectual setting. I waited two years for my exit permit to be approved, but it never came...maybe that was a good thing.

In 1951, I was ordained. I was helping out at a local YMCA and I wanted to become a YMCA secretary. So the director of the YMCA, a man named Scofield, encouraged me to go to New York's Union Theological Seminary. This was the Seminary where _____ was a professor...the person who told me to read the Bible. So I went there and told my story to John Knox who was the Dean of Admissions. I told him that I wanted to become a YMCA secretary. He asked me how I became a Christian. I told him my story. Then he asked me to consider the three-year study towards ministry. He said that if I did not like it, I could change my major. But I liked it. So I graduated Seminary and came back home.

I met Howard Toriumi, Don Toriumi's brother, who was a pastor at the San Francisco Japanese Church and later the pastor at Union Church. He asked me to consider becoming a minister in a Japanese Presbyterian Church. He is the one who led me towards ordination and the ministry. Howard told me about a Synod meeting at Occidental College where all ministers from all over the state would be present. He invited me to spend a week with them there which might help me make my decision about coming to a Japanese Presbyterian Church...at that time I did not know what the JPC was about, except for the San Mateo church.

Since then, I have been involved with the JPC churches. My first church was the Long Beach Japanese Presbyterian Church, now called Grace Presbyterian Church. I stayed there nine years. My second church was in New York City where I was co-pastor, the English speaking pastor. We were in New York two years, but by that time, we had five children and the conditions were such that it was just too much. So when the Call came from the San Francisco church, I went there as my third pastoral assignment for nine years. We helped rename this church from the Japanese Church of Christ to Christ Presbyterian Church. The fourth church was Monterey, also nine years there. And next came the missionary experience in Japan. I had wanted to finish out my pastoral experience in Japan and then retire. But when my son died, we left Japan early to return to the States...so we were in Japan only two years. And lastly was the Altadena First Presbyterian Church where I was pastor for six years. After that, I had a couple of interim pastor Calls. My total pastoral experience was 43 years.

In Altadena, I found the church to be very stable. It was a historic church with a long history with JPC as well as in the community. The membership was very dedicated. I remember Elders Sakamoto, Uchida and Mitsumori as wonderful and dedicated people,

very active in the JPC. During the 1980s, when I was pastor, however, I saw the passing of the Isseis.

Their Issei children (Nisei) were dedicated also. But the church at this particular time was led more by the fervent conservative new Christians. They had a very narrow and intolerant view of anyone else as compared to Issei Christians who were much more tolerant and much more compassionate to other people and groups. Within 2-3 years after I came, the younger Christians began to leave, probably in part because of my own theology.

My idea about Christianity centers around Jesus. Theology is thinking about how the situation is, so to me it is not a matter of how liberal or conservative you are, it is your attachment to the personal Jesus. You are a disciple not because of your theology but because you follow Jesus and that determines our relationship to other people. They are like the fundamentalists in Muslim, as well as Christians here. To me, about the question of gay marriages, that is incidental. The real question has to do with Jesus himself and our relationship to him. But now, the denomination is split wide open between conservatives and liberals. The Presbyterian Church can almost be seen as having two camps.

In my days at Altadena, I followed my denominational affiliation in my sermons, the official thinking of the churches, which was more liberal, and that agitated even more the conservative young Christians in the church. And they left.

Many of the other churches, like the mega churches, are following the major patterns of marketing in the world outside the church. The church, in my thinking, is our loyalty to Jesus, and Jesus always said, follow me. So we should not be following corporation psychology or pattern or culture. We should be following Jesus.

I have been thinking about this whole issue of what my faith is. First was the death of my son. Then Janet, and now Rhoda's condition. I face the fact that I have lived 83 years of life, the first 60 years as a happy-go-lucky Presbyterian minister, not knowing how people in need feel about the tragedies in their life. I can sympathize with them, but I can't really empathize.

Once you make a commitment to Jesus, you have to become a disciple of Jesus over and over again. This country is so strong and we are so dominated by our culture. Churches today are held captive of the culture rather than captive of Jesus himself. This is a fundamental critique of all the churches, including the Presbyterian Church. When I first became converted, the Faith and Life curriculum had a God-centered and Christ-centered emphasis, and it also had a liberal influence in trying to explain all of this so that it made sense intellectually. To me you can't separate the mind and heart

I have read the works of Dietrick Bonehoffer, a brilliant theologian from Germany who was hanged by the Gestapo just before the Allies occupied Germany because he was involved in a Christian underground movement in a plot to kill Hitler. He wrote that to

follow Christ means to follow Christ through the cross, through death, and it is only through the cross that you can get to resurrection. You can't separate those two...the cross and the resurrection is together. At first, I did not like reading Bonehoffer because I thought that he made it too hard, too demanding on our lives, to follow Jesus. But there is nothing else you can do but to rely upon Jesus himself.

There are two things I would like to say to the younger people at the church and to those who come later. The first is: Don't get hung up on the theology of the fundamentalists and liberals, but think in terms of Jesus, your relationship to him and to other people. Don't be captured by the worldly thinking and don't let the church become a so-called corporation. Think about Jesus in terms of relationship to other people. Think of the other person, whether a good person or a bad person, as a person who Jesus loves. Some of these people are not disciples yet, but they are potential disciples, and Jesus lived and died for them too, and they have just as much worth as you. Also, think beyond your life and your family life...think of life beyond your life.

Secondly: In terms of people nowadays, we think in terms of the Asian movement...the APC. But also remember the Blacks in particular because they are the forerunners of opening up this whole movement of racial consciousness. The Blacks are still considered underclass. Just because you as an Asian have achieved much, don't put yourself in a class alongside the whites, but consider the Blacks too, consider them for Jesus.

Rhoda Iyoya

Rhoda Iyoya

RHODA IYOYA
February 25, 2005

I was born into a Christian family. My grandfather became a Christian in Japan. He moved to this country into the San Leandro area. One of the things he started at that time was a soy sauce business. However, soy sauce was not popular at that time and did not sell widely, so that business failed. So he began a nursery business. My grandparents had nine children, five born in Japan and four in the USA. My father was the second son who came from Japan to San Leandro when he was of high school age. At that time they were already Christians and helped to establish a Christian church, a Holiness church.

My mother also became a Christian in Japan through the ministry of the Salvation Army. She was hoping to teach in Japan, but the school where she was teaching told her that she could not continue on staff any longer because she had become a Christian. So she joined the Salvation Army and they sent her to the States to train. She went by herself and was very much on her own...her father and mother had been previously divorced in Japan. She met my father around the time that the big earthquake hit Japan and when they were both trying to collect funds to send back to Japan. They were married in 1925, and I was born later that year.

It is quite unusual for Nisei to have parents who came from Japan as Christians, so that is why I say that I was born into a Christian family. My father became a minister in Berkeley. As my family helped establish churches and I grew up in the church, I became more actively involved with the younger people and I saw my responsibilities in church work. I would say that I was converted at one of the conferences I attended with young people, and around the age of 14, I made my choice to be baptized.

Because I lived in Berkeley, I was convinced that I would eventually attend the University of Berkeley. But after two years in high school, the evacuation took place. I was 16 years old. We were sent to Topaz, Utah.

In camp, I remember that the Japanese-Americans who were Buddhist seemed to have closer Japanese ties. Buddhists were thought of as more Japanese than the Japanese Christians. So they were not as active in the camp as the Christians. But also, at the same time, there were those who were very angry and thought that the Japanese Christians were sort of traitors to the cause because of our connection to the white churches. That's something that you don't read about or hear about much, but there was that underlying feeling, particularly among the Kibe (born in American but raised in Japan) who were particularly offended by the evacuation. Christians probably took the evacuation in the most positive light possible and accepted it much more readily than those with stronger Japanese ties.

I was at the Topaz Camp only one ½ years. I finished high school in Topaz. We were taught by some volunteer Japanese Americans who had been attending the University of Berkeley, but who were also evacuated. They did not have their credentials to teach, but they were very good teachers. Also, the government hired some Caucasian teachers for

us...one of the teachers I still see to this day, and there were about four other teachers who I remember. We established a very good education system at Topaz. I was part of the first graduating class of Topaz High School.

After I graduated from Topaz High School, I went off to college in September 1943 at the age of 17. During the war, certain people were allowed to leave camp to go to the east coast or mid-west for specific reasons. Students who had been accepted at various colleges away from the west coast were some of the first people to leave camp. I had applied and was accepted at Vassar College in New York, so I left camp to continue my education. The picture I remember most was my mother and father at the camp gate...we were fenced in at camp...and there they were standing by the gate, in tears, to say good-bye to me. But they knew that college was important to my future and they wanted me to go.

I eventually earned a Bachelor's Degree from Vassar. Then the war ended and I returned to my family in Berkeley. I took a job in a biology lab and I volunteered to work with youth groups.

I returned later to Chicago. I decided to work with a community center in Chicago strictly for the Japanese American. There was a nursery school there. Then I decided to get my graduate degree and attended the University of Chicago...my specialty was group work education.

I met Nick Iyoya in Chicago while I was going to the University of Chicago. Nick was living in New York City going to Seminary, but on a trip to Chicago to visit his parents, a friend of his who was going to McCormick Seminary introduced the two of us. We were married in 1952.

I was not limited as a wife of a pastor. I had many roles. I was a pastor's wife, a mother of six, and a member in the Presbyterian church. When Nick became pastor at Christ Presbyterian Church in San Francisco, I took in sewing to supplement our income, but decided that this was not a good option...I was probably making only \$5 per hour at my sewing speed. So I looked to other alternatives in teaching. I had received my second Masters in Education and I worked for the schools in an area near San Francisco's Little Tokyo where there were many minority children. I became particularly interested in what it was like to be a minority child in the schools and the best approach to teaching minority kids. For example, the Asian children were mostly obedient in a structured environment, as contrasted to Black children who were creative and could be much more mischievous. Different approaches were necessary in order to best teach these children. I think that my experience as a teacher in multi-ethnic schools was the seed which began my later work in social justice issues.

In the early 1970s, PCUSA (Presbyterian Church USA) realized that they were not doing a very good job of outreaching to multi-ethnic churches. They encouraged women into leadership roles and that is how I got involved. I became active in the Third World Women's Group, a women's movement among ethnic churches...Japanese, Black,

Hispanic and Native American churches. I felt that the Japanese churches had a definite role in the larger church community. For example, they could serve on national committees such as Presbyterian Women and Program Agency which reach out to local churches. So I began to work in the women's movement, and then served as a liaison to other ethnic churches. I was on the national executive committee of Presbyterian Women and was one of the founders and on the executive committee for women's movement for ethnic churches.

All this pretty much ended...this multi-dimensional career...when Nick and I became missionaries to Japan. My work with the women's movement, my activities with the Presbyterian Church at large, my work as a teacher, all ended. We were fraternal workers in Japan. Nick was the director of the Serendipity Center which was located in Miyakuni, Japan. He was there to help bridge the gap between the Japanese people and the GIs. There were times when the GIs went to the church to put on the program which also helped to bring them closer together. I remember one Japanese woman whose son was killed in America but she was very forgiving person and invited all these GIs over for a sukiyaki dinner. Nick also preached at the Japanese Christian churches on Sunday when the center was closed and it was a good break for the Japanese pastors who never took a vacation.

My work at the Serendipity Center involved counseling and advising marginalized Japanese women who had married or were planning to marry American servicemen and who would be leaving Japan to make their home in America. Japan has its own class system, and marginalized women were those who were not considered part of the mainstream. They were looked down upon because they were interested in these American men. The purpose of my work was to ease their transition to America...advising them of American culture, cooking, environment, etc. Of my many roles, I guess I most enjoyed working with these Japanese women and encouraging them in their transition to American life...to participate actively in their new lives...to do more than being a housekeeper or a cook in the kitchen. I kept in touch with some of the women after their settlement in America and they seem to have adjusted nicely.

While we planned to stay in Japan for five years, we only stayed only two years. That is because of the death of our son, John, who had taken his own life. We felt then that we must return home to be with our children. We came back and finished our final years in ministry here in the States.

We came to First Presbyterian Church, Altadena, in 1983. At that time Sophie Toriumi was living in the manse. So we lived temporarily at the House of Rest which is a way-station for ministers located then on Lake Avenue. We paid \$25 per month or something like that. So gradually, things were worked out with the manse and we eventually moved into the manse.

Like all the other churches where I served, the two areas that I concentrated on at Altadena were Christian Education (CE) and women's work. My emphasis in CE was the "Christian Faith and Life" curriculum. I was a teacher in Sunday School. There were

about 50-60 children, but nothing like the 50's when there were 200. Also, there was a great group of women, but it was more like a social women's club, not really connected with any formal structure. Gradually, they evolved into a group which today is called PW, or Presbyterian Women. I really enjoyed working with the women.

My happiest time as I look back was when our children were growing up and we could take our vacations. Pastors usually get a one-month vacation. So the whole family went on camping trips to the various national parks...we'd have a tent or rent a cabin, the boys went fishing and bring back their catch, we did our own cooking...we had lots of fun. The kids still talk about those camping trips.

My mother, I think, was ahead of her time when she came from Japan, alone at age 21, to train at the Salvation Army. She had that American experience through the Salvation Army and always wanted us to be exposed to different things. She was the one who wanted to take us camping and take the church Sunday School class on a camping trip. I remember when she bought these two big tents, each one housed eight people, and we went to this canyon. We went cray fishing in the river, she did the cooking, and brought along this Nisei fellow to be our leader. Also, she found a piano teacher whose father happened to be a minister in Louisville, Kentucky where she was raised, so this piano teacher had a mission in mind. She'd come to the church and taught those of us who wanted to take lessons, probably charging very little, maybe nothing, and she gave us our piano lessons. So there are some in my age group who play the piano very well.

My greatest achievement/contribution I think was as a parent. And our children seem now to appreciate, in retrospect, the relationship that we have had. However, at age 79, thinking back, I would say that it would have been better if I had spent more time with the grandkids...although we had our trips and our good times together. I also wish I had shared much more with my children. And I think I should have been more straightforward with Nick on things that I thought were important. He was raised in Japan for the first ten years of his life, so his is more of a Japanese background...it's largely cultural.

To the younger people in the Altadena church, I would remind them as one grows older, the distance between the old and the young tends to become more and more remote. Young people need to maintain as much a relationship with their parents as possible. This may be difficult with all the pressures of everyday living, and because older people no longer can get around as easily. But I encourage the young people to go to the Keiro homes, provide transportation if necessary, provide them with the kind of care that will help keep them connected. I also would say that as you grow up and as your children grow up, you need to maintain your relationships within your family, but you also need a wider community than just your own family...a church community.

Now with my illness, my kids spend as much time with me as they can. They arranged for a trip to Hawaii. Then my daughter who couldn't go to Hawaii invited me for a weekend in Monterey and that was fun. Today my son is coming from Walnut Creek and tomorrow he and his son are going to take us to Catalina Island because I have always

wanted to go there. Of course, they seem more concerned about my health than I am. I just tell them that we are living each day fully, with hope for the future.

Rhoda Iyoya went to be with her Lord
on July 17, 2005

Rev. Harriet Johnson

Rev. Harriet Johnson

HARRIET JOHNSON

Feb. 18, 2005

I was born in Wisconsin but our family moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota almost immediately. This is where I grew up...Minnesota with its 13,000 lakes is my home. I didn't know ocean, but water is my great passion. My sister was born 10 years after me. We were the only children in a typical Presbyterian home.

I was baptized as an infant, went to Sunday School as a child, and around age 12, I had confirmation class for six months and was confirmed. I helped in Sunday School and played the piano in the Primary Department. In high school, we had an interesting youth group. Along the way, there were several young men who joined our high school Bible class and they were strong Bible lovers and shared with us the need for a personal commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ...the way to get your life on track. This led me to a real decision to commit to Jesus to do whatever He had for me to do. It was an invasion of the Spirit of God when I was a junior or senior in high school.

Later, I entered MacAlester College, a Presbyterian College in St. Paul, Minnesota. There, the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship group had several strong leaders who also encouraged me...our Bible studies and prayer groups were a real joy. So I went through college...I enjoyed music and journalism and thought my major was to be in one of those areas. But I had a Bible professor who was a retired missionary from Korea. He taught about the foreign mission field and I thought that perhaps this was what God was calling me to do. So I majored in Christian Education and Sociology...then waited to see what God would do.

Along the way I met several graduates from The Biblical Seminary in New York, which is now known as New York Theological Seminary. This was a place where you learned the Bible...you didn't study doctrine and let your Bible fit into the doctrine...you studied the books of the Bible and on the basis of that, allowed God to form your doctrine. I was there for two years in Christian Education and it was a time of real growing in the Word of the Lord. My fellow students, at least one-third of them, were either going to the mission field or were coming back from the mission field for further Bible study, or they were nationals from Africa, India, and other countries who had become Christians through missionaries and had been sent to the USA for further training. So suddenly, my eyes were opened to the world. This was the end of World War II by this time.

One of my friends was going to Japan with the Lutheran Church but that did not impact me at that time because I felt quite young, just graduating from high school and college and seminary, and I thought I needed some home mission training. So I then became a weekday Bible teacher in Virginia, back in the mountains. It was exactly like the place where I ended up in Japan. Parents released their children for one hour per week in Bible class and I went around to county schools teaching them. But the Lord's call to the foreign mission fields was strong. I contacted the Presbyterian Church Board of Foreign

Missions in New York and said that I was interested. They did not ask me where I would like to go. Instead they told me that they needed people in Japan immediately and asked if I would consider it. I said that any place would be suitable for me although I knew little of Japan or the Japanese people...there were very few Japanese in Minnesota. By this time it was 1950. So I sent in all my personal history and what have you, and was accepted as a missionary-in-training for Japan. I went to Yale University to language school for 8 months in 1950/51. The teachers were Japanese teachers who either came to Yale to teach Japanese or they were Issei in America. So my Japanese eyes were beginning to open.

By 1951 I headed off to Japan, spent 8 months in Kyoto which had not been destroyed in the War. It was wonderful. We were in language school for 4 hours per day, and also used a tape recorder...the old reel style recorder...and we lived in a co-op house where English was spoken, so there were limits to what we could learn. One of my language teachers was a beautiful Japanese woman, married to a Christian professor. She was already a Christian, and even to this day we correspond. Then I was ready to be sent to a mission assignment...I knew Japanese very well by this time (joke).

All the single women were being dispatched to Christian colleges to teach English. They had lost their English program during the war and they need help in this area. I was adamant that I had not gone to Japan to be an English teacher. I wanted to do evangelism. I think they really had problems with me in the Tokyo office. But along the way I met a missionary couple, the wife was from Minnesota, and she and I became very good friends. And lo and behold, they were going on furlough around the time I was finishing language school. They told me that they had a wonderful Japanese evangelist friend named Mrs. Sudo who could be a mother and a teacher and a helper to me. I could help her get a kindergarten and some English classes started and that this would be a wonderful way to move into work. This place was southwest of Nagoya in Miye Prefecture. They described this place as a hard place but a good place, and said that Mrs. Sudo would be wonderful...they asked me to come and help and Tokyo said okay. So I went off to the city of Tsu (with Tsu harbor which was part of the larger Nagoya Harbor) a lovely place.

Mrs. Sudo and I became very close friends. She was about 16 years older than I, had two children, was a seminary graduate before the war, her husband had died of kidney problems because there were no doctors available because they had all gone off to China. So she was a widow who had to go back to her husband's family and raise two children. Along the way this senior missionary couple contacted them. Mrs. Sudo made a drastic decision to come back and do Christian work. The parents did not appreciate it but Mrs. Sudo came to help this senior couple and that is where I met her. She taught me, we shared the Bible, and she taught me the proper way of speaking the Japanese language. She was very strict in her instruction and I acknowledge her in everything I know about the Japanese language...she saved me from many mistakes and corrupt language... due to her faithful help over nine years.

After the senior missionary couple came back the following year, we had been doing some Christian kindergarten work and I was teaching English. The Presbytery said that they needed Mrs. Sudo for some specific work in a pioneering area, and if I wanted to go along with her, that was fine. So I did. Then we were sent to another city for a couple years.

Then the Presbytery said that both of us, me and Mrs. Sudo, needed to be ordained. We were both seminary graduates and they needed us in separate places as independent pastors. So while Mrs. Sudo was working on her ordination in Japan, the Japanese Presbytery sent me back to the Minneapolis Presbytery with a letter requesting that I go through the process of ordination so that I could be used in Japan. I lacked a few things for ordination so I commuted from my parents house to the United Church Seminary of the Twin Cities. After one year of study, I was ordained and went back to Japan. Mrs. Sudo went to one place and I went to another pioneering place, but we were close enough to meet every week and we also talked by phone.

I went to the city of Suzuka which was a growing city, in the so-called country, with 150,000 population, with one little Christian group...we met on tatami. They wanted that group to grow into a Protestant church under the Presbytery. We went slowly and the Lord blessed us. We moved from tatami to a big room. We were able to build a church on Presbytery-owned land through the contributions of many people and organizations, and we grew and grew. We had a membership of 80, and the average on worship service was around 70. After 33 years with this church, and near the end of my time in Japan, we really went big and had a lovely new sanctuary.

But all those years we had our ups and downs with people who would like to be Christians but who had families who did not approve of the Christian faith. There also was an occasion when I hit the wall after 20 years in Japan. I was very discouraged. The church was growing but I was due back in the States to help my parents. I needed the Spirit to fill me so that I could be useful. Many of my missionary friends thought that they would give up and went back to the States. I thought about that also. But along the way the Spirit moved in. He moved me. I went back to Japan. I realized that the thing we need is humbleness and a seeking heart before the Spirit of God. Things then changed. I felt the freedom to speak. I felt the joy of the Lord. I was refreshed. The church was blessed. I stayed in Japan for a total of 46 years.

During my pastoring of this church in Suzuka, I did come back to the States for 2-3 months off and on, like every 3-4 years. My parents were growing older in Minnesota so I wanted to see them.

As a matter of stewardship we cannot have a pastor who is supported by America and the people in the church taking care of the local evangelism, CE, etc. You need a real program supporting your pastor, supporting out-going mission and everything else as well. So little by little, the Presbyterian Church at my request began to cut my support, and little by little the church took on more and more. Before long they took on all. Eventually, they were very ready to call a Japanese pastor who had a family. By that time

I was past 70 years of age and I realized that the transition time would have to come, and the sooner the better before any health problem hit me or any other event might happen. This seemed a good time to leave. . I praise God for his wisdom to work that out, so that I could return to the States.

Knowing that Minnesota has four months of bad winter, causing one to be shut in because of ice and snow, I chose to live in California. And by that time, my parents were off to their heavenly home. So that is how I came to Westminster Gardens in California.

I had known Larry and Lillian Driskill in Japan. In the year 1999 the Driskills determined that because of Lillian's health issues, Larry needed to cease his Nichigobu work at First Presbyterian Church, Altadena. Larry recommended me to Session as his replacement. So in the autumn of 1999, I began to take over the sermon translation in the little back room of the Sanctuary, and I began a Nichigobu Bible class once per week.

I did not actually know who was hearing the translations of the sermon but I learned that there was a group of Japanese-speaking women who were really hungry for Bible...they did not understand everything that Pastor David was saying in English, and the Japanese translation helped, but it was not a systematic Bible study. So Nami Shingu, Taka Yamamoto, Tamiko Moriwaki, Yumi Choi, and Taksuko Sato were the Nichigobu group who met on Sunday. Mrs. Sato was not always able to come so I would visit with her. So on Sunday mornings, we informally met to study a book of the Bible, and they had their questions and I had my contributions to their questions, and we worked our way through with the Lord's help. I think it was good food for them...everyone needs something more than a Sunday morning sermon. What we were studying in class, they would also study themselves during the week using a Japanese Bible. They occasionally would come up with their own family matters and struggles. We would often have a time of prayer within the Bible class. And periodic fellowship at the Yamamoto home. It was an opportunity to let down your hair and really be Japanese. Mrs. Sato found her way into a solid Christian faith and I was able to baptize her one Sunday. I still try to visit her as much as I can.

Eventually the Nichigobu group disbanded. Mrs. Sato could not come out easily, nor could others. Another moved to Colorado. Another was not able to come. And meeting on Sunday mornings became more difficult.

When Session asked me to be the interim pastor when Pastor David left in 2000, I thought, "well who am I to take over pastor responsibility," and I sort of kicked and screamed in a quiet way during Session meeting. But I accepted this Call with the understanding that the mission study must be done fast, and it was done fast...no one had been able to complete a study quite that fast...so Pastor Judy Rarrick was able to come as interim in four/five months. But I enjoyed the discipline of preaching each Sunday...it was a real joy. There were really never any sad times like sudden deaths during that period...God kept that time very quiet.

The Session members were the ones with whom I had the closest relationship and they were so dear and supportive and very gracious to this elderly woman pastor. I remember good times such as the service of communion at the Japanese retirement home and at Keiro which Altadena had done for years on a quarterly basis. Mas Sugano and later Jim Sakamoto would drive me there. Another elder would also go, and often Sophie Toriumi went with us. There would be a group of about 20 Christians at the retirement home, with a few Buddhists. At Keiro, the staff would bring in everyone (30- 35 people) and they would seat the Christians up front and the non-Christians in the rear so that they might enjoy the songs. There was always a good response since many had not received communion in a long time. They would clasp their hands and tears would flow down their cheeks, and they sometimes could not say anything but would whisper "arigato."

You have a precious group of young people growing up in the church. And not too many who are part of the Japanese American community. It is so important for them to know what is in the past of their parents and grandparents. They won't read a thick book about it, but they might be willing to listen to a 10 minute message from someone who went through the experience of camp. Or watch a quick video at potluck. This is part of the American history. We have a Black History Month, and I don't say that you need a Japanese Internment Camp Month, but you do at least need a chance to share on a basis where young people will listen. Most young people who are of an ethnic background say, "I am American and I don't want to listen to that." But this is not so much our history as it is a part of the American journey that happened during some very difficult days. We need to present this information so that young people will be interested in hearing more about these stories and knowing their heritage.

Miki Kumamoto

Miki Kumamoto

MIKI KUMAMOTO
(4/26/2005 At her home in Pasadena)

I was born right here in Pasadena, so I am a total native. I had all my schooling through Jr. High School here. My parents were one of the earliest Issei members of our church. Consequently, it was easy for me to attend Sunday school and all the church activities. I remember my mother having board meetings at the house and the Fujin-kai (the women's group). They had cooking classes, English classes, and sewing classes - different activities so that the young Issei that came over could adjust to the American culture and lifestyle. I recall Mrs. Waterhouse who was the wife of Rev. Waterhouse at Lake Avenue Church. I assumed she was hired by the city to correlate the activities at our church, mostly for the women. There was a great need to learn the language, to learn the foods and how to cook. If I remember, there are some pictures in the church archives that show these women's groups having their pictures taken with Mrs. Waterhouse.

My background in church started early. That is where we made a lot of friendships. Also, because many of our Sunday school and the children of our church people, the Nisei, came from different grammar schools, the church was a nice place and facility for us to get together once a week. Of course, we made other acquaintances that way. Otherwise, there was the Japanese school, but only those who attended Japanese school on Saturday would meet other Nisei. There were several there that attended both, so it was nice. It sort of kept the cultural contact among the Nisei neighborhood and community activities. That is my basic church background.

Our church was named Pasadena Union Church. We were not denominational at that time because our ministers were not particularly hired to be of their denomination. We had several varieties of ministers, at that time. That was before the ecumenical council helped our church. They had other groups of different churches supporting us. I think we were considered a mission church at that time. Mission churches that supported our church helped us build our structure and hire the minister. The minister at that time was a Nichigobu minister, bilingual. Most of them conducted the Sunday school and youth activities in the church. I recall several ministers who have passed on. Among them, the most recent one, of course, was Rev. Tajima who stayed quite a while. Then following that, Sophie married Rev. Donald Toriumi, and when the war was over and we came back, Donald came to our church. That was the time that we actually became affiliated with the Presbyterian denomination. Since then we have been a Presbyterian church.

While we were at the Kensington church, our Sunday school teachers came from the mission board. Most of them were Caucasians who came from other churches. We were not influenced in one denomination but I remember many of those instructors. We had lots of fun at Sunday school. On Sunday nights we used to have Christian education. It was more or less the social side. But we integrated a lot with the different age levels. We had things like worship service and Bible studies and recreation time. The church had a nice large basement and we used to have socials down there. We had picnics, family picnics. I know we have one picture which was taken up there by JPL which then was not JPL, it was just a park, Devil's Gate Park, I don't know if it even had a name. But we used to have church picnics there. There were other events; we had church bazaars and fund-raisers.

The Fujin-kai was very active. They really worked hard. I recall my mother had a section in the Clarion that was the Nichigobu section and it was all done in Japanese. Every week she had to collect news for the Issei. They had the minister's Bible section and the list of activities for the week. The Clarion was essential for the Issei. I remember my mother was always busy at night writing up the things. At that time, they used the mimeograph. You had to use this wire pen. There was no typewriter in Japanese. It had to be done all by hand. I recall scraps and scraps of paper and my mother putting it all together. Then they would run it off at the church on the mimeograph machine. These activities were close in my home, as my parents were actively involved with church affairs.

And then, of course, by the time I was in Jr. High, I was playing the piano for the Sunday school. We had a choir. As you recall, Sophie and Aya were most influential in our music. I think we did pretty well.

Once in a while we would combine with other churches and have youth activities or conferences or conventions at different churches. We were very close to LA Union. I recall going to the old church. The building is still there, you know. It is now the home of the East West Players. I recall events that we had with the Methodist Church, WLA; the Montebello church, Plymouth, among the Japanese community. They used to have summer camps. Just before I went to Japan, we had a young Nisei girl's club. The boys were active in Boy Scouting. We had a fairly good-sized Boy Scout troop, Troop 41. That's gone now. It's a shame. It would have been nice to continue that, too

I went to Japan in 1936. Rev. Tajima knew the principal who established a girls' Christian school in Tokyo. She made several trips to the U.S. and she encouraged Nisei so they could learn the Japanese culture and still keep their Christianity. She recruited from different cities in California up and down the coast. The first one who went from our church was Kiyoko Shoji (she just recently passed away, in Upland). I believe Rev. Tajima did influence my parents of this girls' Christian school. My mother packed us up and took us to Japan; settled us in the town where the school was located. After about six months she left my brother and me there with my grandmother. We both went to Christian schools. That was the beginning of another whole Christian lifestyle. I am grateful for all these different people who influenced my schooling as well as my cultural background, education, and language. However, five years at that time was very impressive. It was between 1936 and 1941. That is when I met many other Nisei from California and other states. Unfortunately, I had not finished high school, I was still in the middle of junior high, so I was put in the regular school. I learned my Japanese real quick. All the students in my class were native Japanese. Many in the Nisei group stayed in dorms. We did at different occasions, see those girls. The Nisei at our school was quite extensive compared to other Japanese schools. There were several girls' schools in Japan that took in Nisei. Aya went to another school. I saw her every now and then. In Kyoto, Doshisha, was very famous. I think Taka Yamamoto attended and graduated there. Irene Futa, of our church, also attended Keisen, the school I was enrolled in. So it was a tremendous experience.

At that time I was so naïve, I just took every thing for granted. I only did what I was told or instructed and survived. Unfortunately, the war broke out during my last fifth year of school (my last year). I did finish the five-year school and came home. My brother had only gone up to the fourth year and he had to come home with me. We all had to leave - except those that were permanently living in Japan. There were many Nisei who never did come back. Their families were with them and they couldn't come back. Most of their parents didn't have American citizenship, didn't have dual citizenship, and couldn't leave Japan. They were forced, in a way, to stay in Japan.

My brother and I returned to the US in May, 1941. Boats started to bring the Nisei back around February. Almost every month there was a boat of Nisei returning back to the US. Many others had no way; they didn't have funds or the parents were there or they had to stay with relatives and could not come back. So they spent all the war time years in Japan. They had a tough time.

While we were still in Japan, the U. S. government had sent us warnings from the consulate that the actions between the two governments were not going well. So they wanted all the citizens of the US, whether you had dual or not, to return. I recall, too, Sophie's oldest brother, Tsuneo. He was in Burma or somewhere. He had to go from ship to ship to get to the US. He made it back. There were a lot of Nisei from all over the world that were either studying or living in Japan at that time. The American consulate told them that we had to come back. We kept saying, "What for? What for?" They didn't tell us exactly. Negotiations at that time were very complicated. We were not totally aware. Of course, the Japanese government couldn't tell us, either. They were mobilizing at that time, getting ready for the invasion. They were already into China. My uncle that I lived with spent two years in China and he was in Nanking, Peking, and Shanghai... it was a terrible time. Those of us there were already in a wartime condition. Food supply, clothing and everything was getting pretty bad at the time. One thing I remember when I was taking a cooking class, the teacher was going to teach us how to make inari sushi. They had tofu, that was easy, but the rice at that time was rationed. We could not have all white rice. They took the skin of the soybeans that they separated to make the tofu. They kept the skin and tossed it in with the gohan, white rice, and that was our sushi. Inside the sushi was the soybean skin mixed with white rice because white rice was so scarce. Of course, they were sending white rice to the soldiers. People were really pretty hard up. I remember, sort of like rationing, one family would get only so much. Fortunately, one of my

cousins had a rice shop. We were doing black marketing. My brother and I would ride the "L" and take our book bag, empty it and go to his place in the back door, and he would put rice in the book bag. We would have to carry this heavy sack of rice. We were fortunate. My grandmother that we lived with would stretch it out, would put all kinds of beans mixed with the rice. She put beans, squash, and kabocha. We could not eat a complete bowl of white rice. At the time we were leaving for the U. S., it was getting more scarce.

We left Japan the last week in April; got here in the US in May. It took 16 days on the boat. By the time we packed our books and our clothes, we couldn't bring everything home...the souvenirs and stuff we had been collecting over the 5 years. My mother wanted a bamboo steamer. (There were many things that were not coming to the US.) She asked me to bring that home. I wrapped it up and carried it on the boat. Mother said, "What is that?" I said there was no room in the trunk and suitcases and stuff. The easiest thing was just to carry it. I kept it on my bunk on the boat and carried it off the boat. She thought it was so embarrassing. Things were getting scarce both ways.

The war started after I got back from Japan. When Pearl Harbor was bombed, I was at church. It was just one of those Sundays and then we heard it on the radio and we couldn't believe it. We were so stunned. We had no way of knowing what would happen to us here as Japanese citizens because my parents did not have dual citizenship at that time. (That came after the war when they got out of camp. Then the Japanese American Citizens League pushed that issue for the Issei to get citizenship.) That is one of the reasons I think they put us in camp because our parents were considered enemies. The US Government insisted that because we were of that ancestry we had to go with our parents to camp. I remember JACL having meetings held at our church to help the residents in Pasadena. We had several meetings at our church to tell them what the Government was planning to do about the camp situation and then it finally came: our instruction for which camp we were going to be sent to, and what we could take, what we couldn't take. By that time they had confiscated anything that was written in Japanese or made in Japan.

We had an old incinerator in the backyard where we used to burn our trash. My mother put all our Japanese text books of five years' study we brought home from Japan in that fireplace! She didn't know what to do with the kimonos. Fortunately, I had a second grade teacher in another church who said she was willing to hide any of our Japanese things that we wanted to keep. We packed them in trunks and she stored them in her house. That included kimonos and a lot of lacquer ware, some fine china and the rest went to the church basement.

We didn't sell the house. My dad had just bought the house, so he wanted to keep the house. The mission board of the church consented to take care of the rent so while we were in camp we could keep the house and rent it out. They found people who wanted to rent so we received rent money the whole time we were in camp. The mission board was very helpful. They kept our church property and used it as a warehouse. They went around to people who owned their homes and used them as rentals, so a lot of people didn't lose everything. I remember my mother had a lot of books; she was a great reader and collected books. She threw all those in the fireplace. It was a shame. I think it was probably unnecessary. If we had more sources of keeping them, we could have saved a lot of wonderful things. We weren't the only ones that did that. I think when you don't know what to do, you not only panic, but you think of the fastest thing you could do to remove anything that might be suspicious. The police took all our cameras. I would liked to have my brownie back. I wonder what they did with my brownie. A relic, you know. Toyo Miyataki's father took his camera apart and packed it up with his clothes. He put it back together when he was in camp. He was very clever in doing that.

My dad was also intent on keeping something intact. This was not Japanese stuff, it was the one and only car that he bought. He didn't want the car to be taken away from him. He took the car apart, put the pieces in the garage and packed it up so you couldn't see what was in the garage. He undid the car, took the cushions out and took the wheels off and packed them in different things so you couldn't tell there was a car in the garage. So when we came back, the car was all put back together and we had a car. That's one thing my dad had foresight about. He was not going to give up his house, he was not going to give up his car, he was not going to be sent back to Japan. He was not going back, that was not a life for him. We are

going to stay no matter what, so when we came back from camp, we had the house and we had the car. It was totally amazing.

We went to Tulare assembly center first. We lived in the fair grounds at Tulare. Of course, all the housing was in the horse stables, which was not very comfortable. When they floored the ground with asphalt they didn't really clean it up. So when it got hot, all the grass grew up through the cracks in the asphalt. More like living outdoors. Of course, it was well manured by all the animals that had been in the stables previous to that. All the windows didn't have any covers. We had a place (co-op) where we could use our money and buy things through catalogues. We bought things from Montgomery Ward. We bought curtains for the windows. We had cots and mattresses that were filled with straw. You know how comfortable that was. But it was better than being on the floor. I remember, too, the walls between the stalls, between the families. The roof being at an angle, the walls didn't go all the way, they just went straight across the way. So the space between the units were all exposed. You could hear everything that was going on next door on either side of you. It was really community living. There wasn't much privacy but we managed. I guess we all managed. When you think, it could have been worse. I think the Japanese culture, or it could have been our religious background, brought out "gaman"...you just do what you can with what you have.

The meals were terrible. Three meals were all the same - a slice of bologna and a slice of bread and apple butter. Not much nourishment. Until the men decided if they could get hold of some seeds - so everybody started planting little gardens in front of their barracks. That went on even when we went to Gila. We had more land around us because we were on an Indian reservation, which was a shame; we taking the land away from the Indians. The gardeners and the farmers were so clever and they managed to get seeds from the church or the government and we had great fresh vegetables and fruits. I was not there for the watermelon season and my mother used to write to me when I was in Chicago that the watermelons were so good and so huge. Each family got one whole watermelon and could hardly eat it all. They did wonderful things with the vegetation and farming and dairy. They had good goats milk which was very nourishing. I don't know how they pasteurized it but they managed. I recall them saying that eating had changed because they were able to grow their own. At least our camp had good gardeners and farmers that were able to use the land from the Indians to grow these things. I understand they got so good that they sent some out to the markets in Phoenix.

I recall when we were in camp we did take picnics out of the camp, although we were limited as to where we could go. But we saw the Indians. It was hot in Gila. They didn't have any glass for their windows. They just had curtains for their windows and doors. They really had inadequate type of farming. They were probably not as adept as the Japanese people were. I don't think it was fair for us to take over the place. But on the other hand it was available land to make a campsite for 10,000 people. We had a reunion after the camp closed and by then, the Indians had really improved their life style...good housing, productive farming. While they do not allow people on their property, they opened it up for our reunion. There were about 2,000 who attended the event. There were 20 some tour buses. That's a lot. We had a three-day event out there.

After we were in camp for eight or nine months, different churches, members wanted to help those of us who wanted to go out and work, find jobs and housing and schools, and so on. You filled out an application of what you wanted to do and if you found a sponsor outside, the government paid your way to get out. The Presbyterian churches in Chicago, people in their congregations who could use help in their companies and businesses and their homes, domestics. That's how I got out. I left camp in 1943. I found a Presbyterian doctor's home where I could do domestic work. I was not trained, but I thought I could learn. (Great risk on my part, I felt, to boil water or cook an egg, but I could do some things.) Several of us went to Chicago and had friends or relatives or work or housing or jobs or whatever. Aya and I went together. She had friends to live with.

The family I worked for was Presbyterian, so I went to their church on Sundays. At the church they gave us a certain time on a Sunday to have our own minister and have a Nisei and Nichigo service.

While I selected to leave camp and go to Chicago, my father worked in a sugar beet farm in Utah. He had friends in Utah when he was still single. Before he married, he, Mr. Homma and Mr. Ikeda ran a restaurant in Utah. They met when they were in Utah when they worked for Union Pacific railroad, when the train companies were laying tracks in northwestern US, Nebraska, Montana, and Idaho to Washington. They were cooks on the road. When they were released they went on their own. The three of them got together and opened a little restaurant in Utah. They met all the local farmers and local people that lived in that area. Then he got to camp, he wrote to them to see if they were still there and several farmers were, and they were short on hands. The farm hands were all going to the defense factories. It made more money. My dad got himself hired back and he did sugar beet farming in Utah while we were in camp. It was seasonal, so eventually, he returned to camp (Gila). He then applied and left camp again. He worked for the Curtis Candy Company in Chicago. Then eventually he got my mom and sister out. They got an apartment in downtown Chicago. She went into seamstress, garment factory work. Eventually, I was able to leave my domestic and move in with them.

We came back to California in 1947. I finished college by that time. Then I went into teaching. I taught for seven or eight years. My dad picked up gardening jobs where he used to work before. They were so happy to get him back. My mother learned to do sewing in the garment factory in Chicago; then found jobs here in Pasadena. That is how she got started in Gene Burton's; she was there 30-some years. I had a hard time getting into public school. The public school was not hiring Japanese-Americans. In fact, I think I was the first one in the Pasadena School District as a full-time schoolteacher. It took me three years to get in. I had to fight tooth and nail. They gave me a lot of lame excuses for not hiring me. My classmates from the same college came out here; had no problems at all. They were signed up the minute they walked in. For Japanese-Americans, professional fields were a little harder to get into. Nowadays, there is no problem at all. Things are better for the Sansei and Yonsei. I think their cultural background works for them rather than against them and this is due to the many years of hard work by our Issei parents and Nisei.

When we came back from camp we started our church again. It was still Union Church. It wasn't Presbyterian until Donald Toriumi became our minister. And then we had the problem with the freeway. That was what forced us to move. Otherwise, I think we would have stayed there. Now Avery has that property that our church had, and we did pay off the mortgage. I remember having a mortgage burning service. Our church was sole owner of the property.

When the 210 freeway displaced us, the freeway commission bought us off. That is what gave us the money to move up to Altadena. We had to build a whole new church. Maybe, it was a good thing. We have a fine church now. When we first had the architect's drawing, we said, "Oh my gosh. it looks like an otera (temple)!" ...if it wasn't for the cross up there. There was a lot of kidding about the styling or design. On the other hand I don't think there are any complaints about it anymore. It is unusual. It is a nice structure. Too bad it isn't bigger. If we had more land, we could have a bigger sanctuary. I think because it stays that way, it keeps us closer together. Sometimes things get too big then you can't control it as well.

I also remember the Nichigobu minister was Rev. Kawashima and his wife, Hope. They lived in the little house that was on the new property at that time. If you recall, that magnolia tree was one thing that we saved - the one in front of the church - it was on the property of their residence. Then in time we felt that we needed that space to put the fellowship hall and social hall, so we purchased the Boston manse for the minister to live there.

I was second generation for our church; it was nice to have our children grow up in the Sunday school. I would say our church influenced them. We have several children who are very active in a church of their own. My daughter married the son of a local church member, Rick. Now they are very active at Evergreen. Their oldest son and the second son are both going into leadership. Matt right now, the oldest, wants to be a youth missionary. He has been to Japan three summers doing just that. Hopefully, he will go there sometime and have his own church in Japan. He's working on it. Right now his job is working with the handicapped. He is very into the special ed program in school and continues in that work also. That gives him two outlooks to follow. Garron may also going into youth mission work. The boys have had a lot of experiences. Audrey's girls are more professional oriented. Jordan, the oldest, is doing management

work for a development company in San Diego. Courtney is going for her masters in Boston to be a museum curator. Right now she is working on Japanese prints. She is learning so much. Now she is really hooked on Japanese art. She hopes she can follow that after she gets her masters. Megan has always been interested in French. She wants to go to France. She is in the performing arts, so she may go into that. All three girls were into ballet. Cherylynn is still in ballet. She has been doing that since she was three. She is now 16. Not just ballet, but tap and modern dance and folk dancing. Rowland's kids are more sports minded. Probably because of him. One of the girls got a full scholarship at North Iowa State University. So she is in the Middle West. She plays softball. My youngest grandson, Shelley's son, is the only happa in the family. She is the only one that married out of her nationality; she married a Caucasian, so she has the little happa boy. Fortunately, he keeps his cultural interest. He takes tae kwon do - he loves that. He is at red belt right now. He is very influenced by things that are Japanese. His favorite food is arare and ramen. He is taking oral Japanese from a Japanese missionary. I send him a lot of things that are Japanese. He tells the kids in his class that he is the only hapa in the class. He makes that not as a negative thing but as a positive.

There was a time that I played the organ for both Nichigobu and Nisei and sang in the choir. The Nichigo had a lot of influence and kept me in touch with the Issei. I did have the services background in Japan in a Christian school. Being able to understand the language and able to read the Bible in Japanese. And helped me to retain what I learned in Japan and understand the Issei's more. That had a lot to do with my so-called Christian faith and Christian activities and influence with the congregation and the ministers. I truly enjoyed that part of being with the Nichigobu because the Nichigobu service was all in Japanese. There was no English spoken.

The Issei always had Nichigobu ministers who were very strong in evangelistic teachings. Very devoted. They were strong in their beliefs in the Christian life and they lived it. They kept the church together. The wives and our parents and our children all grew up together. To me, having to play the organ and sit through their service was really impressive. I was there Sunday morning as long as the ministers were there before and after. That had a great influence on my thinking of how important it was to have a family of Christian belief and teachings. I didn't do much teaching in Sunday school but I felt that by example, by living like our Issei parents in our beliefs and our teachings, that it was a good influence.

I think my children have carried it on. Fortunately they are very active children and I am happy for that. In fact, Wynne, this past Easter Sunday, re-iterated his belief and got baptized at the San Fernando Holiness church. Glen Alan introduced the church to him. He joined the men's Bible study. He had been there for a year. He now attends on Sundays. He didn't used to go on Sunday because he had to work - retail stores you know are open all day long. Now he has Sundays off. He joined a discipleship class. He is regaining his beliefs. I think that's probably saved him from all the agonies of other things. He has a brain tumor. And they can't do anything. He's taking medication so he doesn't go into remission. He lost control of his emotions and his speech. He had to go into a lot of rehab. But he is able to hold his job and he is on his feet again. It took several years.

Another reason, too, our children made good friends with others in our church. Like Glen Alan is so helpful to Wynne. They were high school friends that all went to church together. They still keep in contact with each other. Like my sister, too, with her Muir high school group as well as her girls' club group. I think our church was very fortunate to have good leadership at that time, in our children's growing up time. Many have had friends that they still retain. I think our faith is showing in that respect. Although they had left the church itself, they have continued their beliefs and spread it out. That is wonderful. A lot of our youth have gone off to do ministry work. The two Hawaii boys that interned at our church, Rob and Nathan, are both ministers. Another one, Mitchell, went to Thailand. Wendy has her church. I think Garrett Yamada has his own church, too. We have many young people who have blossomed out in the church ministry. I think that's great. Of course, Cory's church is really growing. Gary Hino has a church and Rick Iwanaga. I hear his church is really growing. We have some very good youngsters who have been taught at our church.

My faith in church participation and life were instilled by my parents who were active members. Unfortunately, at this time in my life, I cannot regularly attend the weekly Sunday church services, but I do

pray and think of all our members. I have so many fond memories from Sunday school, sometime riding in Mr. Uchida's open car to Mrs. Fuesle's class, to being in the choir under Aya Matsumoto's conducting, serving as Deaconess from the first group of elected staff under Rev. Donald Toriumi at the old Kensington facility. After returning to Pasadena (from Japan, Camp, and Chicago) I resumed my attendance here at First Presbyterian Church, Altadena, mostly playing the organ for both Nichigobu and English speaking congregations, as well as being a participant in the choir. In all these events of my church associations, I shall not forget the peoples of the congregation who supported me...many who have now passed on but had given me the joys of a church life. It has been a great church. It has grown and blossomed in many ways.

My family who has continued in their own Christian lives, in their churches, now give me the satisfaction that our faith is forever imbedded within them and what a glorious feeling that is to me...I continue to pray for all our church lives and God bless you all.

Jimmie Nishimoto

Jimmie Nishimoto

Jimmie Nishimoto- My Life

June 29, 2005

I was born in Pasadena, California, on September 16, 1919. I have memories as a youngster at the age of four or five years old living in Pasadena. I distinctly remember attending the Japanese Union Church on Kensington Place. Although my Mother was Buddhist, she sent us to that church. There were four or five of us children, sitting in the little red chairs and singing praises to God: "Praise Him and praise Him." Our cousins' home was on Palmetto Street, and we would wait for Mrs. Hayden, a Caucasian lady from church, to come. She gave us "goodies." God was already planting seeds of His salvation in my life as a small child in Pasadena.

Then in 1924, when I was around five, we moved to Lancaster in the Antelope Valley where my father and his friend had purchased a bare land of 40 acres in 1912. It was difficult for family to move to this location, and we really missed Pasadena. But, we tried to make the best of our new life. As it turned out, the air was healthier in Lancaster, and I got sick less often.

Our ready-cut home (a prefabricated home with wood panels already cut and measured) was already built by a Japanese carpenter who stayed at a neighbor's home to complete the job. And a horse barn was built. We had our own well, which provided delicious drinking water. A windmill (propelled by the wind) would lift the water up from the underground well into a water tank on top of the building. This well was for domestic use only. A well for irrigation of farm had to be made too.

As a teenager, we had fun playing in the sand making mud pies, creating our own "homemade" pull toys of trucks and wagons, playing with marbles, and designing stilts with baler wire and sardine cans. My sister Aki wanted a Christmas tree, so I drove my pickup truck to a nearby place, chopped down a Cypress tree, and brought it home to be decorated. My "pickup truck" was actually a converted Model T Ford, which I had made. Since money was scarce, we made most of our toys and found creative ways to make needed items with what we had around the farm.

Father had to level and develop the uneven, hard ground and initially hired a team of four mules and horses to plow the ground. It was hard to understand what Father saw in this property. Father had to borrow money to start the farm. The rains from the surrounding foothills of Lake Hughes traveled miles east to our land. The rains washed the fertile top soil away and left the hard uneven ground. This made it even more difficult to cultivate the land. There was also a wash behind our house. The undeveloped land, relentless hot desert sun, cold winters, fierce "dust" winds, the isolated feeling of being "in the middle of nowhere," large tumbleweeds, coyotes, gophers, and other wildlife of the Antelope Valley did not deter the Nishimoto family. Was God using these early farming challenges to shape the character that my family would need to handle the "unjust" life in the Japanese-American internment camps of Poston, Arizona?

Mom took care of the house, raised four children, took care of the finances, and helped bring the farm under cultivation. I was amazed to see how hard my Mom worked. She was petite and spoke little English but had wisdom and inner strength. She sacrificed much but never complained. In the early 1900's, at the age of 17, Mom had left her parents and siblings behind in Japan to begin a new life with Father in the United States. She worked tirelessly alongside Father in performing some of the heavy manual labor of alfalfa farming. My parents did hire a farmhand to assist when we were little. Mom helped to make the farm what it would eventually become in the years that followed when my brother and I took it over.

Little did Mom know that four sets of young eyes watched as she and Father responded to the trials and hardships encountered on the farm, in camp, and living in a foreign country. My folks "quietly" passed down to their children a legacy of hard work, perseverance, and humility. These traits would in turn shape my character as my brother and I took over the farm. Her favorite song "Going Home" always brought tears to her eyes at family gatherings in later years. At the end of her life, Mom received Jesus as her Lord and Savior.

Many alien Japanese started purchasing land for agricultural purposes. They were industrious, and I believe that largely due to their talent and determination in growing the best in crops and produce, other farmers felt threatened. In 1923, the Alien Land Law went into effect, effectively prohibiting the Japanese from purchasing additional land. This law was targeted specifically towards them. Despite this setback, Japanese-Americans found ways to get around the unjust law. With the help of a family friend, we were able to purchase another 30 acres around 1930.

We came through the Great Depression (1932-1937), and the family was helped immeasurably with a farm mortgage loan through the Federal Land Bank of Berkeley. It was completed without paying interest on interest. We always gave thanks to our wonderful government for making this loan available to us. It was as though some Divine Power was helping us. Amazingly, we were able to continue farming through the Depressions years.

In the summer of 1939 to 1940, the relationship between the United States and Japan started heating up. Every male of Japanese ancestry had a dual citizenship with Japan and the United States until the age of 21 years. My brother Ben and I decided we wanted to be citizens of this great country and did not want anything to do with dual citizenship. Our parents agreed, so we went to the Consulate General in Los Angeles to renounce our citizenship with Japan. My Mom told me that I was an American first, that my loyalty was to the United States, and that we should remain here. My mom said this, even though her youngest brother whom she never met fought in World War II for Japan.

Before evacuation, the FBI came to our farm and arrested my Father. Father was imprisoned in a jail in North Dakota. This precautionary measure was taken by the United States government against those Issei men who were believed to have political

ties to Japan. Father was treasurer of the Japanese Farmers Association, an American organization that sold farm supplies. After three to four months, Father was released from jail and sent to Poston, Arizona, to join his family.

That fateful day, December 7, 1941, arrived and my family was ordered to evacuate to an internment camp in Poston, Arizona. For my Mom, because the farmwork and raising a family were so hard, she actually told me that going to camp was a relief from hard labor. My Mom was not saying that the internment camp was "just" - her comment revealed just how difficult her life had been on the farm. In Poston, meals were prepared for the families, and there was no worry where the next meal would come from. She did not have to work.

I was already in the Army stationed in Fort Lewis, Washington, with hundreds of other Nisei. I remained in the Army throughout World War II and was transferred to Camp Crowder, Missouri. I was assigned to work as a dental technician, performing dental work on U.S. soldiers being shipped overseas and those returning home from the field. I was able to travel and see other parts of our great country. My greatest joy would be to take the train to Poston, Arizona, to visit my family. I would enjoy looking out the train window, viewing endless miles of land spanning many states.

After World War II ended, my ambition was to become a farmer. (I had an opportunity to attend college under the G. I. Bill of Rights in pursuit of a profession. A friend had also invited me to join him in the mortuary business, but I declined this offer as well.) I wanted to return home and help my parents with the farm work. Mom told Ben and me that the farm would be ours when we grew up, which was a wonderful incentive. My first tractor was a John Deere, which was green with yellow wheels. We kept our team of mules and horses, since they were also needed. Around 1949-1950, we purchased 80 additional acres of land. Our parents became older and at times needed medical care. However, we were united in partnership and many times we shared our automobile with one another, farm equipment, and a cash flow of money. All four children took care of my parents when they retired from farming. Our family was tight-knit and made decisions together, even though my brother and sisters had diverse personalities with differing opinions. Mom was the "glue" that held our family together.

Our dream was to own three automatic farm equipment: a swather, baler, and hay wagon. A 14-foot swather would cut and arrange the alfalfa in long rows in the fields (windrows). A baler picked up the alfalfa, pressed large clumps of alfalfa together to form rectangular shaped bales of hay, and secured the bales with heavy wire. A hay wagon would then pick up the bales, load them on the wagon, and transport the bales for stacking. All of this could now be done in record time by one man perhaps ten times faster than it used to take when my parents first began farming. In retrospect, God's hand was upon our family... the land that we initially thought was worthless increased in value over the 70 years that I farmed the land. The land was located near 70th Street West and Avenue D, which became a very desirable location. God saw potential in our land and over the years transformed it to a fertile, beautiful, life-giving land. The smell of fresh cut alfalfa in the early mornings or after the rain is a blessing.

After World War II ended, my brother Ben married Helen while on the farm. I met Miye when her family relocated in Lancaster. Her father worked as an irrigator on a huge ranch. Miye's pleasing personality made a hit with Mr. Ball, owner of the ranch where she was hired to care for Mrs. Ball's elderly parents. Between the two of us, I was the quiet one and Miye had a speaking voice. Besides, I thought she was a pretty young woman. We were married on November 1, 1953.

Miye's first and foremost concern was that I become a Christian. For many years, Miye would pray for Christ's salvation for me and our children. In the 1960's, Miye and our three children started attending the First Church of the Nazarene. Reverend Forster and June were the nicest people we ever met. Later on, we transferred to the Presbyterian Church in Lancaster. Reverend Blaine Cragg and Maren became our loving minister. Our youngest daughter Kay is married to their son John Cragg.

Finally, in the mid-1970's, I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Reverend Cragg led me to the Lord. He made me feel like I was a special part of the church. Since I did not go to college, I often felt less gifted than others in the church who spoke eloquently and were well educated. This "lie" kept me from becoming involved in God's work. One day during lunch, God spoke to me and told me that I was a member of the church. After hearing that message from God, I had the privilege of serving Him as an elder and usher. I helped out with the gardening, planted trees, kept the church grounds neat, and did church maintenance work. I began to discover that my identity was rooted in Christ Jesus, not as a farmer, although this was the wonderful calling God gave me.

Reverend Roland Rosson and Barbara were wonderful. God also brought Papa Ken into my life, the father of Reverend Blaine Cragg. Papa Ken showed me the Father's heart for a son.

I felt I was not a leader of the church. However, I did feel that God had given me a heart of generosity, so I have been giving money and or tithe. When we lived in Lancaster, I remembered a Scripture from the Bible. "God made us His people before we were even born," which was always in my head. I always kept that phrase in my mind. Why did God choose me? Why was I special? I always wondered why God was using me. But I really felt good about it.

Before I formed you in my womb, I knew you
Before you were born I set you apart
I appointed you as a prophet to the nation.
Jeremiah 1:5

From 2004 to the present, Pastor Keith Edwards has been a blessing to our church family. For the first time in many years, I have been attending a Bible study class, taught by Pastor Keith. Pastor Keith has given me an understanding about God's Word that I never knew. I enjoy reading the Bible in the evenings now.

We live in Simi Valley and attend the First Presbyterian Church, Altadena. In my spare moments, I love to read the Los Angeles Times for its current events, business, and sports coverage. I also love to play the harmonica and chromonica. I play the old songs of World War II and the old Gospel songs. We enjoy watching Dodger games on television. We have eight grandchildren. Our daughter Kay, husband John and children Christine, Lynn, and Mark live in New York; our son Paul, wife Maxine, and children Andrew and Joanna live in Virginia; and daughter Becky Jean and children Stephen, Justin, and Grace live in Southern California. I gratefully acknowledge thanks to Becky Jean for her untiring assistance in putting this story together.

Miye Nishimoto

Miye Nishimoto
May 27, 2005

I was born in Brawley, California, one of the southernmost towns of California near the Mexicali border. My parents immigrated from Hiroshima, Japan, in the early 1900's and made their way south to Brawley after relatively short stays in Santa Paula, California, and Los Angeles.

When I was two years of age, my natural father passed away; later, my mother remarried. She had three children from the first marriage and four from the second. The Great Depression effectively wiped out my stepfather's trucking business, and he turned to farming. Like so many others, poverty struck, but we had enough to eat by raising chickens and growing vegetables. But times were hard and the older children were relied upon to work on the farm, as well as pitching in financially by harvesting neighboring fields.

The family stayed in Brawley until I was sixteen, when World War II broke out. In May 1942, we were forcibly removed to the Poston I Relocation Center in Arizona, along with 10,000 others of Japanese ancestry.

We were in camp, not because of some wrong we had committed but because the government had erred in its judgment at a time of hostility between America and Japan. Although the Nisei majority were U. S. citizens, we became victims of prejudice and lost our freedom. What were we going to do about it? Mope? No. My friends and I had heard some talk that they wanted to build schoolhouses and an auditorium, and that they needed workers to help make bricks, a huge undertaking. But we decided that we wanted to be a part of that. So every morning, at the crack of dawn, we would board the jeep and go to the building site. A machine would grind out the right consistency of this sticky substance that would be poured into our frames. We wore gloves and would smooth off the top and then carry the brick to the far end of the makeshift shed with grass-top roofs that the people had built. We would then release it from its frame and let it bake in the hot Arizona sun.

Making bricks lasted well beyond summer but I had to quit in Fall 1942 to begin my junior year of high school. The buildings could not be completed that fall, so classes were temporarily held in recreation halls that were allotted one to a block. As I recall, one block consisted of 12 or 14 barracks, plus an office, a mess hall, two latrines, a laundry, and an ironing room. Four blocks made up a quad and each quad was separated by a firebreak.

In October 2004, my family and I attended a reunion celebrating the 62nd year anniversary since our camp internment. Among other events, we visited the school site. I was devastated to see that the auditorium we had so painstakingly built and cherished had been vandalized and torched. The remains of the building were but a skeleton of what used to be, with less than a quarter of the brick walls intact, and the foundation was

ripped askew. My thoughts reverted to the days when the auditorium was a landmark of achievement and the hub of school activity, including dances and graduations.

I am grateful to say all is not lost, however. I have been told that a committee is being organized to restore the auditorium and schoolhouses, and it will oversee an ambitious project to build a replica of one complete block of barracks and related buildings. The Council on the Indian Reservation where Poston stands, I understand, will donate 40 acres of land and will otherwise be involved.

In Poston, I earned a stipend of \$19 per month as a roving reporter for Community Analysis under Dr. David French. My job was to interview people about camp life in general. I once interviewed my drafting teacher who taught students how to make dress patterns. Another time, I observed my little sister playing house outdoors with her playmate and noted their verbal interaction. These human interest stories are preserved at the National Archives in Washington D. C.

Being a teenager, I also had my share of fun in camp. My friends and I would take folding chairs and go to the movies together, the stars above forming a canopy over our outdoor "theater." But I did work hard also...making bricks, doing the housework, sewing...I made my own graduation outfit, a two-piece outfit, I had drafted and made out of sharkskin...the hem was a little crooked but otherwise it looked good.

Jim and I met on the Ball Ranch in Lancaster, California after the war. Every day I would go get the mail for Mrs. Ball and for the tenants, and I would deposit the mail with the Balls. One day when I was bringing in the mail, Jim was there with Mr. Ball. Mr. Ball introduced Jim to me. Mr. Ball who was a very effusive person slapped Jim on the back and said, "Whoever marries this fine young lady is very lucky." I turned beet red and turned around and walked out the door. The way we really got to know each other was through a chain type of thing. By that time we were living in Los Angeles. My mother had a friend who informed her that Jim's mother's friend told her that Jim would like to meet me. So one day, Mother's friend called and said that Jim was there and that he would like to meet me. And of course I already knew who he was, but we met again and that is how we got started.

My conversion experience to Christianity started many decades ago, when I was 10 years old. Actually, my family was Buddhist. Every Sunday we went to church and Sunday school. My parents had an altar to Buddha and another miniature temple to kami, their deity. When I was around 13, I remember praying at the altar, but instead of praying to Buddha, I remember praying to God...a God whom I really didn't know but in whom I believed. So I think that the Lord must have already entered my life at that time without my knowing it, and He was claiming me. Every day I would put up some fresh flowers, or change the water, and I would put fresh rice in a little golden stemmed dish. I think God knew that if I was such a faithful Buddhist, I would also be a faithful Christian after He claimed me.

Although I really did not know who God was, I began to pick up some things to let me know that there truly was a God. When I was in the fifth grade, I had an exceptional teacher, Miss Anderson. She taught us not only the ABCs, but also about honesty, integrity, and other moral attributes. She was obviously a Christian because she taught us a song about Jesus. She selected some students in her class to sing "In Sweetest Accord" at a men's breakfast meeting at the Barbara Worth Hotel. I still remember the words to that song. It was about the birth of Jesus. Also, she asked me one Christmas season if I would draw a picture on the blackboard in colored chalk. She said I could pick any scene I wanted. I don't know where I got this idea, but I drew a picture of the three wise men crossing the desert on camels, and in the backdrop I drew domed buildings and overhead the brilliant Bethlehem star shining upon the wise men. I must have picked up the Christmas story somewhere. Miss Anderson, next to my mother, was the person who was a positive influence in my life as I was growing up.

The war came. I went to Poston I. I was still a Buddhist and I did continue to go to the Buddhist church with my friend every Sunday. But when I came out after the war, the War Relocation Authority, an organization which helped you find jobs, gave my father a chance to be interviewed by Mr. Ball to be an irrigator. My father got the job. At the same time, Mr. Ball was looking for a person to take care of Mrs. Ball's elderly parents, and I took that job. I was around 19 at the time. I lived with the Balls in their home and helped with her parents, as well as performing other chores. They were Christians. Mrs. Ball subscribed to the monthly Christian magazines, Daily Word and Unity, and after she was through reading those magazines, she would pass them on to me. I remember pouring through the magazines. I had not had the opportunity before to read about Jesus. And then she gave me my very first Bible on January 30, 1946, with my name inscribed in it. I must have been searching for something, looking for something to fill a vacuum in my heart, because I read the Bible over and over again...so many times that I eventually had to rebind it. Mr. Ball also took me to a nearby church on Sundays.

My total conversion occurred when I was 20. I prayed and told Jesus that I wanted Him in my heart, I asked Him to be my Lord and my Savior, and told Him that I just wanted to follow Him for the rest of my life.

Later, as a busy wife and mother, I guess I did not grow spiritually as quickly as I would have wanted. When my youngest was four, I told Jim that we needed to begin to go to church. So we went to a Nazarene church about a mile away. But then I felt that God wanted us to go to another church, and around 1966, we began attending the Lancaster Presbyterian Church. We eventually became members and stayed there for 30 years. Around 1975, Pastor Kenneth B. Cragg was influential in my becoming a dedicated and practicing Christian. From then on, I think my spiritual growth was steady.

Around 1995 we joined the First Presbyterian Church, Altadena, where we currently attend. I am constantly amazed to see the cultural makeup of the church changing so diversely. At the beginning, the makeup of the congregation remained basically Japanese American with an appreciable number of Caucasians. Before Pastor David Manock left, the church was slowly but surely undergoing a revolution, so to speak, as it reached out to

other minorities. As a Nisei, I laud this turn of events as we shed the cultural biases we grew up with and follow Christ in Who we are all one.

Given the circumstances, my conversion from Buddhism to Christianity was difficult. But I had an emptiness in my heart that nothing could fill...that is, until I read the Bible and came to know who God truly was. That was when He started filling my heart and that vacuum was no longer there. My parents did not mind my converting. In fact, before my mother died, she was ministered to by an Issei pastor who prayed for her, gave her a Bible, and taught her the scriptures. She had a heart condition and was bedridden quite a bit. When I visited her, I would find her in her bedroom at the edge of her bed reading the Bible. I truly feel that my mother had received Jesus into her heart and is now with God.

Shortly after my conversion, three of my sisters became Christians. I think the Holy Spirit touched them too. One of my brothers also may now be a Christian, and I am trying to help my other brother along. Over the years, I think that the Lord has been able to use me in different and varied ways. I think he has given me a gift of mentoring/tutoring. When I went to Cal State Northridge, I did tutor for two semesters at Taft High in Woodland Hills. Later, I tutored an elementary school child in Simi Valley on my own.

Then, there is God's Miracle Story. This occurred at a time when I was not too serious about doing much for the Lord, but the Lord did give me a nudge. I opened the phone book to the section on children and family services to see where I could start. I found a non-Christian organization. I made an appointment for an interview, went through training, and they matched me with a 17 year old teen who was a ward of the court. We connected immediately...she liked to write poems as I did, she loved music and so did I. I would visit her weekly, and once took her to the local Presbyterian church. We went shopping and went out for Japanese food which she loved. After her initial conversion, I would visit and pray with her and have Bible study sessions. Around the holidays, we would sing Christmas carols with joy and abandon in the visitors' lounge. I had to be sensitive to what she had gone through. She was angry and hurting. My goal was to bring her to Christ and that was difficult because this was not a Christian organization. If she were to ask me to tell her about Christ, that would be okay to do. So I prayed that the Lord would open a door so that I could witness to her. And the Lord did, sooner than I thought. One day she was at a particularly low point. This was not her usual demeanor...I had not seen her like that before. She looked so sad and forlorn that I myself cried. I was there to comfort her, but she actually comforted me. It was from then on that she confided in me. She poured her heart out. She needed that outpouring to allow the Lord to begin the healing process. I told her that life has its ups and downs, and many people will let you down, but there is One who will never let you down, and that is Jesus. He will always be your friend.

She turned 18 and left the facility. One day she called to say she was getting married and asked me to be her witness. I asked when the marriage was to take place, and she said November 1. Well, that is the day of my and Jim's anniversary. So all of this is more

than just coincidence...God brought us together. We attended the ceremony at the county courthouse. She and her husband settled in Oxnard. We would still visit...go out to lunch. I taught her how to cook some Japanese dishes. She is a beautiful Christian today, and she is a woman of wisdom. She told me once that God had cleansed her heart so that she could completely forgive. She said that if she was unable to forgive, then how could God forgive her. So that is why I call this God's Miracle story. I pray for her and her family every day. And I am grateful that the Lord was able to use me. I forgot to mention that she and her husband have since moved to another state, but we still keep in contact by phone. She and her husband are joyfully looking forward to the birth of their first child.

I want to mention how God works when children are brought up in the Christian faith. All my children have married Christian spouses and they are all active in their individual churches. Becky Jean, a single mom, is in the choir, belongs to a Bible class, and I believe that she has even helped start a Bible group at work. For years, she has been the volunteer representative for her daughter's basketball team. She is a legal secretary for an energy firm. Our son Paul and his wife, Maxine, from Virginia are involved in their church. They are both Sunday school teachers. Paul is a civil engineer for the Federal Highway Administration. Maxine home schools the younger of their two children. Kay and John (Pastor's Cragg's son) are also active. Kay helps out with Run for Youth each year and the yearly auction, a gala event, both money-making projects. She is a fifth grade teacher. John, her husband, is also gifted. He had been the Executive Director of Youth Guidance on Long Island for almost 20 years. When they first started, their budget was \$100,000, and now it is somewhat under a million dollars. There are over 100 churches on Long Island that are committed to this ministry to mentor children from broken homes, with the goal of bringing them to Christ. He also has a prison ministry. Recently, John was asked to be the President of a new national organization to manage a mentoring program that is like the one he has on Long Island. It is called the National Youth Mentoring Association. He has declined the offer because he strongly feels that the Long Island ministry is where GOD wants him. He will train another person to take that post.

So God promises that if you are faithful to Him and you follow Him, it's not only going to affect you but the generations ahead of you. And now I see the fruits of His promise and I am blessed that my children and my grandchildren are obedient to the Lord. So out of this seed that God planted in my heart, it is spreading into the lives that touch me. It is awe-inspiring.

I do not want to give the impression that because I am a Christian, life has always been rosy-hued. Many, many times I have had to go before the LORD in times of anxiety, stress, or concern for myself or my family to receive sustenance, hope, and His promises.

I would like to say to the younger generation to observe the foremost command, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:25-27). This leads to life right here on earth, and to God's rich blessings.

Helen Obazawa

Helen Obazawa

Helen Obazawa
September 26, 2005

I always had this feeling that I belonged to God. I was in Japan for seven years when I was a child. Both my mother's family and my father's family were devout Buddhists. My mother's father and brother were both priests and they had big temples. And my grandmother, who I stayed with...the last thing she told me before I returned to America was, "When you go back to America, they have a strange thing that they call Christianity. Don't let them fool you." Well, I was nine years old and didn't know what that was all about. But when I came back, I remembered that Grandma told me don't go to Sunday School. So on Sundays, I would hide even though my brothers went to Sunday School. My mother told me that America was a Christian country and if you are not Christian, you will miss a lot, so you should go. But I said, "No, I can't because my grandmother told me not to." That went on for months and months. Finally, I went along with the neighborhood kids to Sierra Madre Bethany Church.

My mother herself did not want to become a Christian. She said that she was a priest's daughter and for her to change now was too late. Then I remember the Sakamoto's came along...Jim's family. They were the missionaries. They invited everyone to change their religion from Buddhist to Christian. Jim had a father, mother, uncle and aunt...they were the only Christians here. And they were the ones who went door to door, making a nuisance of themselves according to my mother. They would come over to our house and they would talk to my mother, and when they left, they would say that they would come back. And my mother would say, "No don't come back...you don't need to come back." But they kept coming back, and my mother and father eventually converted to Christianity. My father first, and then he talked my mother into converting.

And I remember that the Sakamoto's had home meetings, and sometimes it would just be their family, and other times maybe one or two others came to join them. You could hear them singing Christian songs. When new people come to the city, the Sakamoto's would invite them to the meetings at the church and at their home meetings also. Jim was the only child between the two Sakamoto families. He was with his uncle and aunt half the time it seemed. When his aunt died, he took it very hard.

I've lived in Sierra Madre all my life. My neighbor used to work for the Sierra Madre School in the cafeteria. She asked me if I wanted to take her place when she moved away. Since my kids were in school, and it was only suppose to be three hours per day job, I thought I would try. So I tried it, and then they wanted me to come more. They sent me to a place where I could learn to prepare the food, not just serve the food and clean up. So they made me a manager right away. After that, they asked me to train all the new people who wanted to be a cafeteria manager. So eventually, I trained all the people to prepare food for the schools in the Pasadena Unified School District at the Sierra Madre School. I did this for about 20 years. I quit just before I turned 60.

What happened was that Ray's parents relocated from Chicago because they did not like the cold winters and the hot and sticky summers. So they moved to Pasadena. They

were very devout Christians. They found a house near the church and were very happy. But in about 10 years, Ray's mother died, and Ray's father came to live with us. My daughter had already moved out, living in San Diego, and my son was going to move soon. So we had a room for him. Ray's father was 80 years old then. We did not think he would live much longer...maybe two years more. But his mind was perfect, he knew the Bible thoroughly, he loved going to church, and he had a number of Issei friends. He grew very healthy I think. Eventually, his friends passed away, one by one.

I was an active member at Bethany Church in Sierra Madre. I was in the choir and I taught Sunday School kindergarden. But I began to take Ray's father to his church in Pasadena, and then sneak back to my own church in Sierra Madre. But that got to be a hassle. So I thought because he would probably not live more than two years, I would take a leave of absence from my own church and take him to the Kensington church. Two years went by. Another two years. And another two years. Ray's father really was doing so well. By the time six years went by, I changed my membership to the Pasadena church because he was getting healthier all the time. He died after 14 years.

About 25 years ago, I met a Japanese woman at a tea in Sierra Madre. She asked me if I knew how to speak Japanese, and I responded back to her in Japanese..."yes, I can speak Japanese." I had studied Japanese language in college. She asked if I knew anyone who could help her with English, or help her find someone to help her with English because she had come from Japan with her husband and family and was really having a hard time. She was the wife of a Japanese businessman who had come from Japan to America for a temporary period of time. He had brought his whole family here. I agreed to try to help this woman and invited her over to my house twice per week for English lessons. After a month or so, she told me that she had a number of friends who also wanted help with their English, and asked me if I could help them also. So I agreed, and then I had about four students. Then each of the students said they had a couple friends who wanted English lessons. So eventually, I ended up with two groups. We studied grammar and pronunciation.

Then one day, I decided that I was going to bake bread. And the bread happened to be in the oven when the Japanese ladies arrived, and they thought that fresh bread baking smelled so good. They asked if I could also teach them how to cook too. So I agreed to also teach them to prepare just one dish along with the English lesson. Then they wanted me to show them a little bit more...two dishes each time. So I agreed. Apparently, their families were just thrilled to have American dishes prepared at home. You see, the thing in Japan is that they don't use ovens much. So being able to bake a cake and make cookies...that was a real treat for them. Pretty soon, they wanted to quit the English lessons altogether and just stay with the cooking lessons. But I did not want to do that...I wanted to keep at least some part of the lesson devoted to English. So during the time that the stuff in the oven was cooking, we had an English lesson.

I did this for 20 years or more. The ladies rotated into the class when they arrived in America, and when they went back to Japan, they rotated out and someone else took their place. Just this last year, I quit doing this.

I think God was at work during my time with these Japanese women. For example, during Christmas holidays, they knew that this was Christ's birthday, and they knew I was a Christian. So they asked me for more details because they did not really understand Christmas or how I felt about it.

Then they said, "Helen, you are always so happy." I said that I have a Living God who I can talk to. And I can ask Him to take care of the problems that I have, and He will listen to me.

They would say, "Helen, you should really charge us a lot more for these lessons." I said that I was not doing this for money. I am doing this for my Lord. I told them I did not need a lot of money, and they were just amazed...they said they never heard of such a thing. They thought that I was very different from other people they knew.

This was a service to my God. So I feel very fortunate that I could do this. Even though I feel this was just an everyday thing, not outstanding, I think God was pleased.

Ted Tajima

Ted Tajima

Ted Tajima
June 14, 2005 and August 2005

My father's family was Christian for about four generations. They came from the northern part of Japan, near Sendai. My dad came first as a seminary student, and then went back to Japan and married my mother, and brought her back with him. He went to seminary in Berkeley and then to Yale for a year or two until his first son was born. My father's elder brother came first to America and he made his money as a labor contractor, providing Japanese immigrant men for hire in the orchards of Orange County and Riverside County. My father came to go to Seminary but he also worked with my uncle. My uncle was already a Christian and he became a very faithful layman in the Methodist Church in Los Angeles.

I remember things in my father's life that showed true Christian spirit. When we lived in Salt Lake City, he had a Model T Ford and he would drive to Wyoming, Nevada, to mining towns in Utah to reach people and to talk with them about God and Jesus. Yeiki Matsui's family come from Nevada, and they remember my Dad because he went to see them.

I recall an incident when a Caucasian man got pretty angry with my dad and gave him a shove. I thought, "Come on, Dad, get back at him." I was a kid and I wanted him to defend himself. But my dad just talked with the man, and eventually was able to calm him down. I still think of that as "turning the other cheek." If he had swung on him, that would have been wrong.

Recently, in talking with Hei Takarabei (a retired minister in the Monterey area), I learned of a story about my father that I had not heard before. It was when my father was ministering in Salt Lake City, he used to evangelize at the mining camps that had a lot of young Japanese men. He learned that one young man was in prison because he was accused of killing someone, and he was sentenced to be executed. My dad felt that execution would be an injustice because this man was not mentally fit. He spoke to the other men to raise money to hire a lawyer in his defense. Well, the attorney got him off and the man was released from prison, only he had no where to go. So the prison warden gave him a job working at his home as a domestic servant.

At other times, around the 1920's, my father went to these mining camps with his huge 35mm projector and a reel of film. And he would talk the cook of the mining camp into letting him show the movie and talk to the men when they came in from dinner. These were young guys from Japan who worked in the mining fields. However, it was a losing proposition since after dinner, they just wanted to gamble and drink. But things like these, what my father did and how he did it, showed that he was a man of God.

I came to the Kensington church in 1928 when I was six years old. I came because my father came to answer a Call to be the minister. He had been a minister in Salt Lake City where I was born. At that time, pre-war, Pasadena had about 600 Japanese living here. I think that one of the reasons that our church was so well attended was because there were

no other Japanese institutions here. There was just the Japanese Association which had a Saturday Japanese language school. And we had the Japanese Union Church. But there was no Buddhist church here. Buddhists families would have to go to Los Angeles for worship, but I remember that some families sent their children to our church instead.

Our church was built in 1923 on Kensington Place. The cornerstone is now located in our own sanctuary. The church building did not have a kitchen. Actually, the 100-year old house behind the church had a kitchen, and when my dad came to this church, we lived in that house until another house was bought and brought to that location. This other house was located then in the Marengo Avenue and Green Street area. It was a large two-story house that the church purchased, cut in half, and trucked eight blocks to Kensington Place, one-half-a-house at a time. I remember living in that house and remember the cut between the two halves of the house. The great part of this history was that the Issei, in the midst of the depression, thought that they should and could do this. The crash was in 1929, and in 1930, they bought the house which became the manse and an office. And it was all paid off in 1938, partially due to the bazaars managed by our mothers to raise money to help pay off the mortgage. When you asked the Issei how they spiritually felt about all this, they responded, "we prayed and worked hard." They were an amazing people.

One of my favorite stories about the Issei is about a time when they could not get bank accounts. So they started their own bank. In our own church, the Issei started a credit union for members and I believe that some other people could join too. Each month they would put \$10 away in a savings account, so in four years, you accumulated \$480, plus interest. You could also borrow money and pay it back with 6% interest. This was better than a bank loan...actually, much better, since we could not get a bank loan at that time. This went on for 60 years, this savings and being able to borrow money from the credit union. This was a good way, for example, that we Nisei were able to buy furniture and things because Nisei at that time were buying homes. And the credit union never had one person default on their loan. Then later, the need for a credit union was no longer there because we were then able to save and take loans from a regular bank, plus we were told by the State that we had to observe certain regulations in order for the credit union to continue. So we decided that we did not need the credit union anymore and disbanded.

Back in the 1930s, our church had a good Sunday school...most of our teachers were Caucasian who came from other churches in the community. We had a young people's group which was junior high school (7-10th grades) through high school (11th and 12th grade) through junior college. So we had a wide range in age but the church offered numerous social activities for the kids. We also had bazaars; we had melodramas for two summers in a row; social clubs for various age groups. Our church was like the center of our community, and in addition to the moral and ethical training, we had a lot of fun. We were a close knit community. There were probably about 40 Issei and there were many more kids. I remember that the families were large families with many children.

In 1942, the war broke out and we were evacuated. My parents decided to go with the church people to camp, and they eventually ended up in Gila, Arizona. My younger

brother and I decided to go to Salt Lake City rather than go to camp. We had friends in Salt Lake City, so I boarded one of the trains that went from the west coast to the Rocky Mountain States and the mid-west. I thought that we would have more freedom of movement outside of the Western Defense Zone, a designated area which required all people of Japanese ancestry to be interned. This Zone included all of California and parts of Arizona. Phoenix was peculiar in that you could live on one side of the street and have to go to camp, but if you lived on the other side of the street, you didn't have to go to camp. Central California was like that too for a while, but eventually all of Central California had to go to camp

While in Salt Lake City, I had various jobs: I worked in a furniture store, I unloaded freight cars for the produce market, and I worked for a company which made cinder blocks for construction. I also tried to go to school although that did not work out.

Meanwhile, my parents left camp and moved to Cleveland, Ohio. Sets also went to Cleveland, and I decided to go to Cleveland too. Sets and I had previously met under the best of circumstances...singing in the choir. We got married in Cleveland.

There I worked for a company that made cutting oils...I operated the machinery. Then after the war was over, the military drafted me. I was in the counter intelligence corps and I taught Japanese language familiarization to counter intelligence agents who would eventually be sent to Japan for the occupation. And also, because the reports they were writing were so bad, I also taught them English. It was a bit ironic that a Japanese was teaching not only the Japanese language to Caucasians, but English as well.

Around 1946-47, there was an effort by the Congregational denomination to get us to go to Caucasian churches. We were a mixture of Congregational and Presbyterian Church, called Union Church. But there were enough of us around that we wanted our own church. Then we called Don Toriumi who was Presbyterian, but he would only accept the Call if we were Presbyterian. So we became a Presbyterian church, and he became our full time pastor in 1948.

Pasadena had a good reputation among the Japanese. So after the war, people heard that Pasadena was a nice community to go to, or come back to. During the war there was a group called Friends of the American Way who watched over the church property and had an office in the church manse, and they made an effort to speak well of the Japanese in the community. They put up a sign, for example, listing the men who were enlisted in the military as a way to show our loyalty. So when we came back to Pasadena, there were a lot more people here than before the war. I think the Japanese population increased by 5-times...maybe to around 3,000.

But there was discrimination. For example, during the pre-war period, there was a dance at the Civic Auditorium every weekend, but we could not go...people of color could not go. So we had to have our own dances.

Also, the Japanese had to find homes within the "restrictive covenant" in which Japanese and other minorities were not able to live east of Los Robles or Marengo or west of Orange Grove. We were restricted to the area around the old part of Pasadena in the Fair Oaks/California area. So most of us ended up going to McKinley Junior High and Washington Junior High. There was a man named William Carr who worked real hard to help the Japanese and others to purchase property, in spite of the restricted covenant. I don't believe that he was trying to make money as a realtor. In fact, because he worked so hard to help Japanese and others to find homes, he had a lot of pressure on him from the other real estate people. In 1952, the restrictive covenant was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

Regarding employment, the chances of getting a job in the Caucasian community were very slim. People went to college and came back with their degrees, only to come back and work in a market or as a gardener. Some went back to Japan.

We also could not participate in the community sports activities, so we formed our own Japanese leagues and played other Japanese teams. At the Brookside Park swimming pool, we were not allowed to go swimming there except one day per week. This was called "International Day," the day that all people of color could go swimming. It occurred allegedly on the day before they cleaned the pool.

In order to own land, you must be a citizen. So some families put the ownership in their children's name.

In spite of these problems, I think the word "vibrant" describes our church after the war. Even then the church was a kind of social center for the community. We had two gardener associations (one English-speaking and one Japanese-speaking), in the community. We had an active senior high group and junior high group in the church. Rev. Toriumi advised the youth group. Sophie helped. And we all taught Sunday School. And we were bursting at the seams.

A major event occurred to the Kensington church when the State of California decided to put a freeway in through our church property. In a way, it was sort of a blessing because it gave us an opportunity to expand our church to provide for a growing congregation. The State paid us for the property and it enabled us to find this property in Altadena and buy it and build a new church. The goal was to raise \$223,000 to build a new church, and the people really responded. Even many people who did not come to our church supported us. And we were able to pay off this loan in record time...seven years.

And then when we moved to this current location in Altadena, we had more space. In the Kensington church, we had 5 or 6 rooms which were used for classrooms. Here we have fewer rooms but they were larger. We had a manse on Winona near Orange Grove. And then later, we purchased the manse on Boston.

In the design of this church, we were advised by the Presbytery not to use any architects in the congregation, and we had three architects at the time. So we did not use them

although they were on the committee. I was on the committee, Sets too. We selected Smith Williams as our architect because they used a lot of wood in their churches and we as Japanese have an affinity for beautiful woodwork. We did have some issues, however. For example, Sets fought hard for two bathrooms in the Social Hall, but she lost.

I think we Nisei have marvelous examples in our parents. I think we regret that we have not shown our appreciation to them, but we recognize what they had done, their acts of faith, and we have inherited that and have tried to pass it on. I think it is rubbing off onto our Sansei. I see this in different ways. When my daughter Elaine had her 50th birthday, there was to be a big celebration. And she said not to bring gifts for her, but if you want to bring something, just bring tote bags, or a back pack, so that these could be sent to the children hit by the Tsunami. We had a big pile of backpacks. And this was her idea. Sometime in her life, extending a helping hand to people made homeless filled her heart.

We Nisei have not really developed a vocabulary which we can use to express our spirituality. We are not very conversant in these things. But this doesn't mean that we don't have spirituality. Like my wife, for example...when we were driving out in the country, she would say things like, "This is God's country." And she lets out that she sees God's work, God's handiwork, in whatever it was that we were looking at. I think that a lot of us have that kind of aspect in our make-up, but we don't know how to say it. We were raised with a sense of living a life that was exemplary of a Christian. We were raised with an idea that what we do and how we live represents what Christianity is, what the Christian life is. We can't get up in the pulpit and express it, but we can live it.

For example, we have the Thursday Bible group who has been meeting for eternity. They do a lot of things that we don't ask them to do, but they see it and they do it. They are the ones who started the spring hike breakfast, for example. And they are the ones who started the annual teriyaki chicken dinner sales. At one time we use to have a mochi-ski event when we made mochi, Japanese style. They did not do that to make money, and they didn't make money, but they felt that this activity was about our culture and about our church...something that we could enjoy doing, and that people could enjoy that we did it.

Although I was raised a Christian, many of us come from a Buddhist background. So some of us are "getting" the Christian way of life through observation and participation. We have one person, for example, who does so many things that affect the lives of other people, making their lives a little bit more enjoyable, but he won't join the church. I think he finds it hard to accept for himself what we believe, but he accepts what we believe as being the way to live, the way to do things, the way to be. I think that to different degrees, this might be true of others in the church.

In my family, we were raised as Christians. My father spoke of God and preached of God. My mother spoke of God and showed us examples of where God was present. In her own case, when she was about 45 years old, she had a ruptured appendix. The first doctor could not diagnose it properly, but the second doctor did in time, and she was

operated on and her life was saved. It was a lesson that God is present, and thank goodness for that second doctor.

As for me, I had four different instances where I could be dead: two auto accidents and two surgeries. Whether God was present was not...I could not say for sure, but I feel that God has a reason for keeping me around a bit longer.

My wife had a number of real serious illnesses...mastectomy, stomach cancer, high blood pressure. She never spoke it but as we went to see her in the hospital, there was never a time when God was not on her side. When she was 82, her heart finally gave out. I think that the way she looked at life and the way she lived her life is a lesson for kids. She was very active here in the church. I think she was the one who started the rummage sale, and she had much to do with the boutique, sang in the choir, taught Sunday School. She gave examples to the kids of God's goodness. I never remember a time when she said anything that was not Christian spirited.

As a family, we prayed every day, in grace. The kids grew up in the church. But like many in their generation, they are not going now to a church. The oldest one has gone to a church in Spokane...a number of different churches, but is not a member of a church. She still supports our church. Sometimes I wonder if I or we have failed to instill them with a sense of needing to go to church. That feeling is not there...that they need or should or must go to church. The youngest has become a minister and I think it was more a sense of her need to serve. This sense arose from her job as a counselor and her belief that women in the electronics industry were making headway but many were not happy. She talked to management and indicated that some counseling would help, and they backed her on this. And from that, she went on further from counseling to ministry.

For some, church membership may not be the answer to what their needs are. Many also have moved away. And many still regard this church as their church. But there are those who may not participate in the church, but they have in their heart a feeling for people, and they work it out in some way or another in their lives. Church is not someplace to go to for what you can get, but it is where you go to be part of the family of God.

I think in our church one of the ways we can be more helpful is to develop more of a mission sense. We were once the objects of a mission...when people gave us support and a helping hand. We now are in a position where someone else can be the object of our mission. In different instances, I think that our church has been generous. In the earthquake in Osaka and Kobe, in a matter of a few weeks, we raised around \$5,000 to send. Then the Aids project last year, when our congregation was very responsive to this cause. So when we can and when we know how, we will.

What I would like to convey to other people, the younger generations, is that you are only one of a vast number of believers. You don't know what kind of impact you are making, but remember that it is all for a common good...the Kingdom. You come and you are gone, and you may think you have not done much, but it is like a brick that has been added onto the wall, and the wall rises. My father for example was a firm believer in

building churches. He built a church in 1924 and it is still being used. He drove a Model T Ford to mining camps throughout Idaho, Utah and Wyoming...I guess it was like the Methodist minister riding on a mule to different places. But he did all these things with just one thing in mind – carrying the message to the people.

Frank Tanaka

Frank Tanaka

FRANK TANAKA
(Interview on March 11, 2005)

I was born in Modesto on February 16, 1914. Most of my early education was in El Monte where we lived. I had three brothers and two sisters. My oldest brother was a great baseball player, captain of the baseball team at Occidental College...I consider him one of the outstanding Japanese-American superstars. He was also the manager of the LA Nippon sports organization for many years. I don't think he ever got the notoriety that he deserved.

I graduated from El Monte Union High School. My family had a produce market in El Monte where I helped out. Eventually we bought out someone in Pasadena and moved to the Farmers Market in Pasadena. It was located at Colorado and Lake, where Ralph's Market. I helped out by going to the wholesale market on 9th and San Pedro in LA in the early morning. We were a complete market...sold everything and the very best of everything. We had a stall, 10 feet away from our competitors. We did fairly well as a family business. Today, I still go around and check out the produce in many different markets.

After high school, we moved to Pasadena. I went to PCC for a couple years, majored in Investments. Then I transferred to UCLA and earned a BS in Investments in two or three years. I wasn't quite like my older brother...I was active in all the sports, especially tennis, but I was never a big help to my school in sports. After UCLA I became the buyer for the family produce market...there went my social life because I had to get up so early in the morning. While I had a degree, it was very difficult for a Japanese to compete with the whites in the financial markets. I tried, but I was not successful. So I decided to work from home. I subscribed to magazines and newspapers. I probably used some of the savings from the family business to do some investing. I continued to invest all my life. I think I have been fairly successful.

I established a scholarship fund at the church in honor of my sister Jeri. There was not enough money to pay for her college education. My brother, being the oldest, got first choice. He was a phi beta kappa. But Jeri was as bright and deserving as he and other members of the family, but she had to run the family business. Jeri wanted to go to college...she was an outstanding high school student. Jeri collected both coins and stamps as a hobby. But I don't think she ever got to do what she really wanted to do.

During the war, my family and I were sent to Hila Camp in Arizona. I had a chance to get out of camp and was sent to Columbus, Ohio to work for the Department of Defense. I worked with machinery, but I never had to see combat. After the war ended, I returned to Pasadena. My mother and sisters were in DesMoine, Iowa. I was trying to get my family together. I tried to get work and eventually worked in a business dealing with Venetians blinds. I was not able to return to the family produce market because I did not have the money to buy out the Caucasians who operated the markets.

I have been going to First Presbyterian Church Altadena for a long time. I remember Pastor Don Toriumi. I was a member when the church was on Kensington Place. What I appreciate most about the church is the friendships that I have found there. My wish for the church is that it prospers and grows and that people can meet each other and form lasting friendships.

Ruth Tanaka

Ruth Tanaka

Ruth Tanaka
June 24, 2005

I was born in Riverside, California in 1921 on Market Street. I had two older brothers, James and Authur. My father had come first from Akita, a northern prefecture of Japan. He came by himself, and then went back to Japan and married my mother and came back and settled in Riverside. I still have the steamship ticket for her travel to America. According to the steamship ticket, my mother came from Yokohama to San Francisco on August 25, 1911. Another registration paper indicates that Tokunosuke Kirita, my father, was a resident of Riverside since 1909.

My father went around to the different ranches and collected eggs, and my mother candled them to make sure that the eggs were not fertilized. Then he took the eggs to the market, probably in Los Angeles. I also remember him gathering watermelon from the different farms and then trucking watermelon to the produce markets in Los Angeles. My two brothers would go with him, and on the way back, they liked to break open the watermelon and eat the heart. Then, being mischievous boys, they would throw the rind at the back of passing cars to see how close they could get without hitting the cars. Once my brother wanted to see how close they could get to the front of the oncoming cars, and he accidentally hit a car. We had to pull over, and as a consequence, they both got their ears pulled or something like that.

We left Riverside when I was in the third grade. It was depression time and my father was looking for other work. We moved to Los Angeles for a short while, near the General Hospital. When a neighbor friend moved to Pasadena, my father decided that Pasadena might be a good place for us also, so we moved to Pasadena, first to Del Mar Street and later to Bellevue Drive.

I went to school at McKinley Jr. High. I remember having to take a test to get placed in the appropriate grade. I had already skipped third grade, but they wanted to advance me one more grade. But that didn't happen because I told them that I did not want to be in the same grade as my older brother and they agreed. Later I went to a four year school which was on the site of Pasadena City College. Then it was called Lower Division (grades 11-12) and Upper Division (grades 13-14). We were in tents at that time since they were in the midst of constructing the school which is now PCC.

When the war broke out, we went to Tulare Assembly Center and stayed there about four months. Then we went to Gila, Arizona Internment Camp. Families lived in barracks. We slept on cots. I was on one end of the barrack with my parents. There were maybe three other living units in our barrack. The barracks had wooden floors and wood siding planks with big cracks in between, so when the sand storms came, the sand and dust would blow into the barracks.

I remember the latrines at camp. It was in an outside building and in the inside, there were wooden benches which had holes cut in them where we would sit. Then overhead, there was a bucket which was filled by a constant stream of water. When the water reached a certain level in the bucket, the bucket would tip over and the water would pour out to flush the latrine.

My father worked at the mess hall. I recall that once he had saved all the juice from the cans of fruit which he fermented to make wine. One time, he put the liquid into a jar and he was going to transfer the liquid into something else. But then the bell rang for dinner and he decided

to do this later. When we came back, the jar had somehow split at the bottom. I could see the wine dripping out and seeping through the wooden floor. That afternoon, Reverend Tajima came over for a visit. I know that he could smell the wine. I got out of there fast by saying that I had to go to work at the post office.

I was going around with Jimmie before he went to the service. Then he came to camp and we got married. We had our honeymoon in camp, in what they called the "honeymoon cottage." It wasn't any different than any other barrack, except that we had privacy.

At a certain point during the war, the government wanted us to leave camp if we had another place to go to, I guess so that they would not have to support us. So I did not stay in camp long since Jimmy and I were married. He was stationed at Camp Robinson in Arkansas.

I then moved to join him. At first, I went to Little Rock, Arkansas and met him in the lobby of a hotel. While waiting for his arrival, a man was sitting nearby and inquired of my race. "Sioux?" he asked. I just shook my head. He asked if I was of another tribe...I shook my head again. It never occurred to him that I was of Japanese descent and I never said anything to enlighten him.

We found an apartment in North Little Rock. I found a job doing housework. Jimmie was able to come home several times a week as he had a car. He was a cook in the army. On his days off, he got to come home. There were several apartments in the house where we lived and everyone was very nice to us. There was a little grocery across the street. Mrs. Williams, the owner, was very kind to me. She helped me to stretch the coupons we had to use for buying food. She asked me once if I would like a chicken. I said "yes." So she gave me a chicken... but it was a live chicken. "Not to worry" she said, and she wrung its neck. After my surprise at this, I de-feathered it. Now what? Luckily, Jimmie came home and did the rest. At that time, we had to use coupons to buy food so the chicken was a welcome addition to our meal.

Also during that period, we could not buy clothespins that had metal springs. They were made to work like clips and held the laundry on the clothesline. One day, coming home from work, there was a windstorm. The window at a nearby dry store had been smashed. I envisioned my laundry blown all over the neighborhood. Fortunately, my neighbor had taken in my laundry. She and her husband remained our good friends. After the war we had returned to California. We sent them a Japanese platter which they displayed on their dining room table. War time had hardships but friends were a saving grace.

Then Jimmy was transferred to Texas and he and I drove to Abilene, Texas. Jimmy was a cook so he usually got the weekends off. Then he finally was shipped overseas to Italy. He landed on VE (Victory in Europe) Day, so he never really had to see combat fortunately.

Before the war, Jimmie's parents owned a restaurant on California Street in Pasadena, across the street from the Mikuriya's florist shop. They had a regular customer at the restaurant, named Mr. Carr who did a lot to help the Japanese during and after the war. Jimmy knew Mr. Carr from the restaurant. I got to know Mr. Carr also because I was the secretary to the JCL, and Mr. Carr was very interested and involved in the welfare of the Japanese, which was not an easy thing to do at that time. I remember that when we were evacuated, we were not allowed to take pets, so we could not take our dog Ambrose. A neighbor, Mr. Nelson, wanted Ambrose because he was such a good watch dog, so we gave Ambrose to him. Later when we were allowed to have pets in camp, I wrote to Mr. Carr and asked him to see if he could find Ambrose and send him to us. Mr. Carr went to our old house on Bellevue which was then occupied by the Garcia

family. The Garcia family had adopted Ambrose and they did not want to give him up, Mr. Carr was very persuasive in getting him back to us. Mr. Carr was also very helpful to me after the war was over and the Japanese were released from camp. I lived with Mr. and Mrs. Carr for a while after the war.

Then later, when Jimmie and I were looking for a house to purchase, Mr. Carr helped us with that. He showed us some houses in a nearby area. I asked him, "Mr. Carr, if you were to buy a house, which house would you buy?" He said, "This one right here." So we did buy that house on Rosewood Lane in Pasadena, where I presently reside.

Later, Jimmie and I had an eating place on the corner of Colorado and Madison. Then we had to move because Zinke's came in, so we moved to Green Street which was a block away. Our shop was called "Coffee Break." Jimmie and I opened at 7:00 a.m. and a lady came in to help us. We closed at 4:00 p.m., cleaned up, and went home at 5:00 p.m. Jimmy would then start washing and cooking the potatoes for the next day. He made hash browns and I made potato salad. Sometimes I made a pie or a chocolate cake. The hamburgers were hot sellers. The hot dogs much less so.

On New Year's Eve, we would stay open much later because of the New Year's crowd waiting for the Rose Parade. I remember that Jimmie's brother would park his camper at the eating place so that Jimmie and I could take naps while our sons, Ron and Doug waited on the customers. I guess that New Year's was a fairly profitable night for us. We had this family business for about 15 years, and then we retired.

I began going to this church when it was on Kensington Street. I was about 12 years old at the time. I remember walking from my home on Bellevue to Kensington, and I walked alone because my two brothers did not go to church, nor did my parents. But I came each Sunday. I don't remember now why it was important to me to keep coming to church, but I was drawn there. It wasn't because my best friend went there because she didn't. And I don't remember being attracted to any boy there at the time. But I kept on coming. Maybe there was something at church that was nourishing me. I have been coming for over 70 years now. I have belonged to the Thursday night Bible study for many many years. Right now, we are reading "The Journey Towards Holiness" and when we are through, we will celebrate with a dinner at the Hometown Buffet.

And I like our church now the way it is changing. It is not just a Japanese church anymore. I like that we are becoming multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. That is a good thing. We are all God's children.

Faith has been a big part of my life. As I look back, we Nisei went through many different trials in our lives, such as living in the depression, the war with Japan, the internment, and then coming back to begin our lives again. But as for me, I can't really think of any time in my life that was bad. Even the camps. We older Japanese have a phrase that we grew up with..."shikata-ganai." It means, "that is the way it is and that is what we need to accept." But for me, I also had my own faith which supported me. "Shikata-ganai" isn't enough. You have to also have faith.

Sophie Toriumi

SOPHIE TORIUMI

2/28/05

Interview by Betty Mikuni and Alice Okuno the home of Sophie Toriumi

I was born in Riverside, CA. My father, Kengo Tajima, had gone to seminary in Berkeley and then he went to Yale to finish up. While he was at Yale the plan was that he would go back to Japan and he was supposed to teach in the seminary in Sendai. While he was finishing up at Yale, he got a call for the church in Salt Lake City, Utah to become their minister. He decided he would rather do that than go back to Japan. He accepted their call in Salt Lake City. But my mother, brother and I were already in Japan waiting for him to come back to his position in Sendai. Since he changed his mind, we had to come back, which was OK. We came back to Salt Lake City and started our life there. First we had a storefront church that the Mormons lent us. It was Mormon territory. Then my father built a church and started a congregation. The building is still there. By the time we left Salt Lake City, the church was pretty old. It was thriving and doing well. The Masaoka family is very prominent in politics. Their family was really poorly off. I remember how my father had to kind of help them to get going and get started in business. He also went into outlying areas where Japanese were working. He would take a movie camera and show movies to the workers because they never got to do things like that in the old days. He would give them a little lesson in being a Christian. I remember that these men would make jewelry, and necklaces and stuff. I guess that was their pastime. They would give them to my dad. My dad gave us a lot of necklaces and beads in those days.

I have always been in a circle of Christian friends. I think it was what my parents were doing that kind of fell on the rest of us. There was a family that had a restaurant, Japanese food restaurant, he became a very devout Christian because of our family being there. In those days we were limited racially – going to school, going to different places. We kind of stuck together and did things together. Which was all right. We got our strength from doing that. While we were doing that, my mother made me take okoto lessons in Salt Lake City and Japanese lessons.

There was a big earthquake in Japan 1924. All of us had to wear Japanese kimonos and we would go around the neighborhood to collect money to help earthquake victims in Japan. Mary Tamura and I were among those in the crowd. We went around with buckets. Mary Tamura's father had a farm. They had a running stream along there. Our big thing as Sunday school kids was to go there and play in the water. We were there until I was in the 7th grade and then we moved to California.

We were called to the church in Pasadena. We were here when Pearl Harbor was bombed. We were restricted when I got married. We couldn't invite friends because they couldn't travel more than five miles. Pearl Harbor was on Dec, 7 and we were

married on January 7. He was living in LA and I was in Pasadena and we couldn't travel more than five miles. So we said we might as well get married so we wouldn't be separated like that. We got married. His family couldn't come down because they couldn't travel more than five miles. My cousin said to take her car and just go up there. We went up and nobody stopped us. We got to Sacramento where his family was. She put on a big spread to celebrate the wedding. Then we went to San Francisco to visit another family called Morita's. He saw that we got married, so he immediately got his daughter to get married to Carl Morita's son. It was so funny. Then we came back.

I met Don when his seminary choir came to sing at Oxy. Somebody said to take Sophie to hear this choir sing because they are from San Francisco. So we went to hear the choir and I met him. He was in San Francisco and I was in Pasadena. Then he came down and was serving the Japanese churches in LA area. He would go to each church, there were about five of them, every Sunday for different youth activities. That was his job.

Then since the war broke out, you couldn't travel, you couldn't go very far. Our first home was LA Union Church where the playhouse is right now. We were up there in about the fourth loft, I think. The first night I was going to take a shower and their organ had a big something in the bathroom! We couldn't take a bath or anything. It was right there. Nobody was living there before, so . . . We had a hard time. Then immediately people were being sent out to different camps, places like Santa Anita or Topaz. We helped people who were ordered to go to certain places. Some had to go to Santa Anita. Some of them were sent to Corona and other places. We were helping the army do this instead of doing our church work. When it was time for us to go, everybody was gone by then. We were wondering where they were going to send us. Sure enough, we were just taken to Santa Anita and dropped off there. One of the close ministers was named Hugh Nelson; his church was the Michillinda Church. He was real close to Santa Anita. He would come to visit us at our campsite quite frequently. He'd ask us what we wanted. I would always say a hamburger. He always brought us hamburgers. He couldn't come in; he had to just pass it through the gate.

At Santa Anita they had this piano way up at the top of the bleachers. Nobody was using it. A really well known piano teacher in the Japanese community was at Santa Anita. I thought I might as well take piano lessons from her while she is here. It was really nice. I had piano lessons on the bleachers. And then the minister would come and bring us hamburgers. (Chuckle)

We were in Santa Anita for three or four months. One day they decided to put us on a train and they didn't tell us where we were going. We had to close our shades and everything. We were sent to Heart Mountain in Wyoming. I guess others went to other camps. Some of them went to Topaz. The church denominations assigned one pastor to each camp so too many religious groups wouldn't be going to one place. It just happened that Heart Mountain got Gordon Chapman, who was a Presbyterian, assigned to take care of that camp. The Baptists were assigned to another camp and so forth. Gordon Chapman was really very thorough, he not only got us organized in the camp, but he also went all around the whole area to introduce the local people to who we were, that we

weren't enemies. That we weren't people to be afraid of or anything. He really got the churches interested in our living at Heart Mountain. They began to come and help us - by providing hymnbooks. Somebody brought an organ so we had an organ in our church. They would bring special food that they got at the market, like the Kumai family needed eggs that they weren't getting enough of. These people were so good to us, bringing the things that we needed and trying to make a connection. These people were from the towns around Heart Mountain. They were church people. Gordon Chapman lived in Southern California, but they were assigned to different camps. We got Gordon Chapman, and the Presbyterians taking care of our camp. It was really nice. He was very thorough. He went out and talked to the people so they wouldn't think that we were enemies.

When we left camp, we were invited to Cleveland to the Council of Churches office there to help those who needed help in relocating and establishing themselves in that community. We were in Cleveland for a while; also because my folks were there and had a house so we could live there. That is why we went to Cleveland. My mother had gotten cancer at that time, so she died there. At a certain point we were invited back to So. California. I don't know how we did it. I think we were invited to come back and open Hollywood Presbyterian They invited us to come and open that church. So we did. We were there for several years. My daughter went to nursery school at Emmanuel Presbyterian Church. I think we were invited to come to the Pasadena church. I sort of grew up in Pasadena. By that time I think, Pasadena had started this committee to help welcome people back to Pasadena. They were the ones that first got a student to enter Pasadena City College. Esther Nishio, they got her to come in as the first student. There was no problem. I forgot the name of that committee, really had ...made enough connections among the churches in Pasadena so they were all aware and willing and not aggressive. It really worked out very beautifully. There were the Nicholson's. He was very good during the war about taking things to the camps when they needed something and keeping up the connection. Then he helped resettlement here in Pasadena, too. I think we were very lucky because it went so well without aggressive people being opposed.

When we had to leave Pasadena, there was a storage space in our church. Catherine Fanning, a missionary, lived there and she was sort of a caretaker of that place. People stored their things there during the war. The Nicholson's, whenever people wanted stuff from the storage place, would find what they wanted locked up in the church and take them to the camps. He really did a great job for them. Most of the Pasadena people were sent to Gila, Arizona.

When we came to the church in Pasadena, The property was taken over by the freeway. People weren't rebellious or anything. But that time I think we had already gotten the lot that we have now, just the property, there was no church up there. I think somebody had the foresight to see that we needed to rebuild.

The church was mostly Japanese. I don't know if we have any pictures of the church in those days.

How did we raise the money to build a new church? I think it was hard. They had made savings of something. They had done quite a bit of preparation because they knew they were going to build. I don't know how they did it, but I remember Bob Takata's father was very instrumental in helping and Shig Nishio, he was really good about property. It worked out. Nisei and Issei helped out.

Don pastored the church in Hollywood which is there now. He was sent there first and then he was assigned to open up Pasadena. That is how we moved to Pasadena.

I started helping at the Lincoln School, a grammar school on Orange Grove, and Mr. Hanes, the principal got me a job at the education office to answer phones and get substitutes and office kinds of work. Then he said I ought to go to school and get my degree. So he urged me to go. I went to Claremont, to a school for people who wanted to get their teaching degree. I remember I had gotten Frank Iwata's first car. I would drive to Pomona every day for class and got my degree for teaching. Then I could legitimately teach classes. Mr. Hanes got me a job teaching at Burbank School. He was very helpful. I think all these people, friends were really good in supporting us. By that time, I think Japanese-Americans were accepted. I remember Mr. Hanes always wanted Japanese teachers because he knew how good they could be. I had his support and his help. One of the teachers taught first grade, Miyamoto. She was really good. Everybody wanted her class. I was second grade. If they were good students, I was always glad to get them. Then I would pass them on to the third grade teacher who was Thelma Koga. She was really good. We had a thing going. We taught for a longtime. I quit. Miyamoto is the only one who is still doing some of it. She does some privately, I guess.

I was youth choir director in the old church. I have pictures of the junior choir at the old LA Union Church. We even had gowns for them I think. We put on programs every year. By that time, a student at Oxy, Bryce Lamont, his mother was very prominent on the Board of Education in Pasadena, Bryce was taking organ. He really helped us. We had a choir and we had a concert every year. I have that picture somewhere. That's when we started making cascarones, too. I had gone to some thing in Asilomar. I went to this old city hall. There was something about when they used to have parties, the adults made cascarones. Adults would use them for their parties. I thought that's a good idea for us. We started making cascarones. Part of the choir practice we would work on that and then we would go out and play volleyball. We kept them together for a long time. That was the organization we had in those days. The kids love cascarones today. I got the idea in Monterey and it was the adults that did it, not just the kids. Sab Masada and Hei Takarabe. Sab wanted to be a minister already and he came and worked in our church. I guess he was going to Fuller. Hei decided he wanted to become a minister. He was going to be a doctor at UCLA. Hei came to our church and became a Christian and decided he wanted to be a minister. Cory liked to be an actor and take part in plays at our church. Then when he met his wife to be, she drew him away to her church, Evergreen Baptist. Rick Iwanaga went to be a missionary in Brazil.

I think the problem in our church right now is that we don't have enough young people to inspire them as much. They are still growing. Carolyn is having a hard time keeping them together and trying to do things that will excite them. The interesting thing is that they do go river rafting, etc. It was so expensive. I remember when we were young we went on this big truck. We took all the food for camping. We went on this big truck up into the hills and camped. One time we were going to have stew and when we got to the hills, stew took a long time to cook. We wondered why we took stew. The girl who was in charge thought oh my goodness. We learned a lot. Those days were really good days for us. They all went in different ways, because there are hardly any of them left in Pasadena, but they are around.

I hope the church will continue to grow I realize that it will be a different kind of congregation and different kind of activities. I think that we are doing OK. We are trying really hard to keep the momentum going, I guess. I don't know if it is so hard because we are so interracial. If it were all Japanese, maybe it wouldn't be hard to control. I don't know what the problem is, but we do have a problem with young people.

I am kind of sorry because my children are in places where they don't get involved in church that much. They went to a certain church for a while because their children went. But it wasn't because they were really involved. They are kind of different now days. My newest great-grandson went to be baptized, but I don't think he is going to be active in youth group or anything. His father is Catholic. But just because they are Catholic it doesn't mean that they are going to go to church every Sunday. I think wherever they go they should be active. Things are different now. We can't dictate to them.

Harry Tsushima

Harry Tsushima

Harry Tsushima
August 11, 2005

My father came to this country from Japan at the age of 17, around 1904. He was the eldest of the family and would normally be the one to stay to take care of the family, but he wanted to make his million. He knew no English, but managed to work at different jobs. At one point, he was a houseboy and he and the lady of the house had to use a type of signage to communicate. If she wanted him to work a certain number of hours, she would point to the clock and then make a circular motion with her finger, representing the number of hours he was to work. If he was to buy eggs, he would squat down and cackle like a chicken so that the store owner would know what they wanted. Another time, they wanted to buy insecticide, so they got down on the floor and flapped their hands like a dying insect, and showed the whites of their eyes, so that the proprietor would know that they wanted to buy insecticide. During the San Francisco earthquake, he took the cash register for the owner and fled up the hill from the center of the earthquake where the fire was burning.

He worked his way to Southern California and then he married my mother as a picture bride. I think he was honest and sent her a picture of himself, while others sometimes sent their bride-to-be a picture of someone else who might have been more attractive.

I was born in 1921 in Pasadena. I was the only child. I remember the Japanese community when I was growing up in Pasadena. There was a laundry in Pasadena called Meiji Laundry on Colorado near Pasadena Avenue and Vernon Street owned by several Japanese men...one was Shig Takayama's father, one was Mas Yamaoka's father, and one was Fred Fukutaki's father. There were five owners altogether and they hired Japanese workers. My dad, to his dying day, never drove a car but delivered laundry in a horse and buggy. In those days, Orange Grove was the residential area for the rich, those who came from the East to Pasadena for the winter. As a kid we used to go downtown and see all the limos with chauffeurs, and I remember that we wished that we could be chauffeurs.

As we grew up many Japanese lived on Vernon Street. We had a gang called the "Vernon Street Gang." We had many Japanese families in the area of the Kensington Church: Suzuki's, Tosh Kawahara's family, the Ozawa's, Uchida's, Matsumoto's, Nakamura's, Yamaoka's, Fukutaki's, Ikeda's, Mitsumori's, and we had a neighborhood market, Tanzawa's Market.

We went to Lincoln Elementary School which is the present site of the Post Office on Lincoln and Orange Grove. We use to walk about 1 ½ miles to McKinley Jr. High School, past the Santa Fe Station. It was a historical site and they made movies there. We had many movie theatres in Pasadena, and we use to go every Saturday. They showed us the movie in incremental parts so we would have to come back for the next 10 or 12 weeks to see the whole movie. In the first week, we saw the first part of the new movie and what was coming next week. When we came back the next week, we saw part of what we saw the week before, then the new part, and then a preview of what will be

playing next week. We saw cowboy movies, war movies, spooky movies. My friends and I would buy one hamburger to split, and one soda with two straws and we were each intent upon getting our share. After a spooky movie at night, we had to walk home. But we were afraid that the Boggie Man would grab us if we walked on the sidewalk, so we ran up the middle of the street until we got home.

Although my dad never drove a car, we went everywhere by bus or streetcar...baseball games, the beach. We would hop on the Red Line to take us to the cable car to Echo Mountain, and then the trolley to Mount Lowe. But I wanted a car. One day Ted Tajima and I went out and I bought a car. Ted drove it back and parked it in our driveway, and the next day, we went to the Rose Bowl and I learned to drive.

I also had to go to Japanese school, which I hated. A bus would come around and pick us up. Other kids would say, "Here comes the Chink school bus." But it was actually a social time for us. I remember the great big lunches we brought with us.

On Sunday, as kids, we would all go to this house near the church. But Rev. Tajima knew exactly where we were and he would come and tell us when it was time to go to church. We had Caucasian teachers since the Japanese Nisei were too young to teach. When the war came and we were evacuated, Caucasians looked after the church property.

I remember taking Rev. Donald Toriumi to a LA Dodger game at the Coliseum, way back when. As we walked up to our seats, way up in center field (the farthest seat from home place), I mentioned that these were the closest seats to Heaven. He chuckled. I wondered what he was thinking.

I remember on December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor Day, I was working at a produce stand in front of the grocery store. Then I heard on the radio that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. We closed up shop and went home. My parents could not believe what had happened either. Then shortly after, all Japanese had an 8:00 p.m. curfew imposed.

I remember going to the Palladium with a few other couples. The bouncer came up to us and asked us for proof of American citizenship. The males had proof but the girls did not. So we were asked to leave for our own protection, but he refunded us our money. Then we left, went out to eat. The next time we all knew the rule so we all had proof of citizenship with us. So we did what we could do under the circumstances. We accepted the way it was. That was how we were raised.

Then the evacuation came. My family went first to an assembly center and then to Gila, Arizona, a God-forsaken place with heat and the dust storms. But like the Japanese say, "shigatoganai"...so we made the best of it. In camp there was not much to do but to eat and sleep. But they did have a camouflage plant, making camouflage nettings woven in different seasons to hide the canons from aircraft. We were able to get some money for this work, but since we were located outside of camp, we had to pay for our room and board. They paid us piece-meal, by weighing the netting. And if it didn't weigh what it

should, we had to spread the net on the ground and fill in the different areas...so this really slowed down production.

If you wanted to leave camp, you could but you had to go to a school or work outside of California. I wanted to get a job in photography and someone told me that there was a job in Chicago. So I prepared a resume and the next day I filled out the application and then I got a telegram saying that I was accepted. I was shaking in my boots because I had no experience, and yet I had a job offer as a photographer in Chicago. So I went to Chicago, met the owner who was a German fellow, and he showed me around the studio. He showed me his equipment, asking me if I was familiar with this and that, and while I had never seen the equipment, I implied that I did. Then he gave me the keys to the shop and told me to open up the studio on Monday morning. I was amazed that he would trust me like that. I found photography to be very interesting work and I stayed with him until I went into the service. When I gave him his keys back, he told me to keep the keys in the event I ever returned to Chicago on furlough and needed a place to stay.

I was about to volunteer for the military, but my draft came up first. So I went to Phoenix to the induction station to board a Greyhound bus which was to take me and another serviceman to Salt Lake City. But the Greyhound bus was already packed with people. No room for us. So the Sergeant got on the bus and addressed the passengers. He said, "I have two future servicemen and I need two seats...you and you...out." They got off the bus and we got on the bus, sat down, and we just looked straight ahead for the entire trip to Salt Lake City. I felt 50 pair of eyes just staring at the back of my head.

I met Mae's brother, Ben, in the service. Ben said that he wanted to introduce me to Mae's roommate. So I agreed and we went to dinner with Mae and her roommate, Lena. But throughout the evening, I would only talk to Mae. I later asked Mae for a date, and she agreed, but to this day, she claims that I told her that this would be a double date. All through the movie, she kept saying, "I wonder where Ben is." I didn't know what she was talking about. I never said that it would be a double date. We still disagree about this today.

Then we got married. I was sent overseas, first to the Philippines and then to Japan. I was assigned to the Military Intelligence Service (MIS). Actually, I had a choice to be an interpreter or a translator. I wanted to be an interpreter, so after the war ended, I was assigned to the Sugamo prison in Tokyo where they had all the war crime prisoners. Tojo was there too. A Caucasian officer would tell me what to ask the prisoner...for example, if he beat up on people. So we were preparing for the war crimes trial. Sometimes we attended the trials, and the Japanese on trial were defended by as well as prosecuted by US personnel. After Sugamo prison, I worked at MacArthur Headquarters in Tokyo GHQ (Government Headquarters).

I remember seeing Japan after the war...everything was bombed out. Certain buildings were left standing so that we could occupy it. I remember the Japanese people telling us that during the war, the American planes would fly overhead and they would stand shaking a bamboo stick at them, saying how stupid they (the Americans) were. And then

they would see smoke in the distance and the American planes would fly back. Then they would hear on the radio that Japan was winning the war. They told stories of having to go out to the country to gather sweet potatoes for food.

When I returned home, I went to cosmetology school, got a Minnesota license, and worked as a cosmetologist for a while. But I actually didn't care much about doing this kind of work so I called my former boss in Chicago and went back into photography. He was very generous, taking us out to eat, paying me extra under the table.

I hope that young people don't get discouraged easily, like going for a job. They just need to keep at it. One person who was considering me for a job initially told me that I did not have the experience, so I asked him how I could get the experience if I did not have a job. So that must have changed his mind because he gave me a job.

Because of my photo experience, I got a teaching credential in photography, taught at Cypress College, Continuing Education at Pasadena City College, Adult Education at Alhambra High School. I judged at camera clubs and at the County Fair. And I owned and operated a camera shop, worked at Lee Mac Camera and later at Kimura Photomart in Little Tokyo.

I have faith in my life although I don't take a visible role in the church anymore. I remember going to church camp, and when we would go off to meditate, I felt that God was right there with me. And going overseas, looking up at the sky, I could feel that he was there. The one time that I really felt His presence was when I was on the Pasadena Freeway and a sports car swerved over in front of me on the freeway. To avoid hitting the sports car, I jammed on the brakes. I visualized "crash, bang," the shattering of glass. When I came out of the spin, my car was facing the opposite direction. In front of me were three lanes of stopped cars. They waited until I righted myself and was on my way. I thought, "This is not my time." Now, in the mornings when I go for my walk, I stop and I talk to Him.

Mae Tushima

Mae Tsushima

Mae Tsushima
August 12, 2005

My father came over from Japan around the age of 19. He was not really supposed to leave home because he was the eldest of six children, and under Japanese tradition, he would have had the responsibility to stay and take care of the family. His family was of Samurai background, from Hiroshima, and inherited property from the Shogun when the Shogun was taken from a position of power and authority.

My mother came over from Japan as a picture bride. She died when I was three.

The Issei really endured all sorts of hardship here, but they were determined to stay here. I think they had misinformation about what it would be like in America. Many thought that this would be a land of glamour and leisure and riches, as well as opportunity. That just wasn't so for them, as they found out. But they had a determination to make a life here.

About 12 years ago, Harry and I visited Hiroshima. I wanted to see Dad's property in his village which was way out in the country. Our guide, who may have been a distant relative, picked us up and drove us out to the village. He showed us where the boundary of the land began and he said that from this point on, all the land belonged to the Suechika family, which is our family name. It was an incredible amount of land, but because it was not tilled land during the wartime, the government took it.

I had previously seen a picture of my father's home...it was like a castle. While I really wanted to see my father's home, unfortunately, we were not able to go into the home. But while we were there, this man walked over to us and my cousin introduced me as the great granddaughter of the family. He asked us if we wanted to see the Suechika "mon" at the Buddhist temple. I thought we were going to see the family crest. So when we got there, we began looking for the family crest but could not see it. Then, suddenly I remembered my dad telling me that he once got locked out of his home and he had to spend the night in the yard because they had closed the gate on him. He had a big house with a moat around their house, plus a main gate and the small servant's gate. His family had donated the main gate (called a mon) to the church and this was the main entrance to the temple. So the "mon" that I was looking for was not the family crest, but the main gate of the church, the same gate which had once locked out my father from his home when he was young.

My mom died from a ruptured appendix. I was only three, but I remember her and can see her sitting in a chair that looked like a dentist's chair. I remember that when she died, my dad had all of us gathered around her. I had two brothers and two sisters, and I was the youngest.

My father, like many other Japanese Issei, was an itinerant farm worker in the San Joaquin Valley and Fresno area. We had to move all the time...I really hated it. I can't even remember all the elementary schools I went to. And when the grapes were all

picked, or whatever other crop was harvested and the season was through, we had to move someplace else. And we were always in a rental house. But we never went hungry. We always had plenty of vegetables, chicken, very simple food. And we always invited people to share what little we had.

We had a cousin who lived in Fresno, and I use to spend 90% of my summers at her place. They had a big two-story home, and they owned their own land so they did not go from place to place. During the summer, my sisters and brothers had to work in the field, while I was too young to pick. Otherwise, you could find my asleep under the vines.

I grew up very close to my dad. I was with him all the time because there was no one else to take care of me. I remember people trying to find another wife for him. I remember Dad taking me on visits to other people's home for the purpose, I think, of introducing him to potential brides. I can remember my dad saying to people that he doesn't know if this woman would treat his children as their mother would, and he would always refuse. Anyway, I always went with dad to these people's homes, because he could not leave me home by myself, and my sisters and brothers were in school.

I know I was a spoiled brat. If I didn't get my way, I would scream, yell and cry...so loud that my sisters always gave in to me. I remember when Dad gave out his pocket change, my sisters would get a nickel, but I would get a dime. But my sisters would come to me later and trick me into thinking that because a nickel was a bigger coin, it was worth more than a dime. Or if they got a penny and I got a nickel, they would trade with me, telling me that the penny was made of gold. My dad probably favored me more because I was the baby of the family.

During the war, my oldest brother, Tommy, was already in the service. My other brother, Ben, had gone to Minneapolis to go to school and to work. Dad and my two sisters and I were evacuated to Gila Camp I. We were there about two years when Dad passed away at age 65 with high blood pressure. His death certificate cites hypertension, and I think this was true because he was so worried about Tommy being in the service overseas. My brother, Ben, told us that with Dad gone, we could not stay in camp alone, so my two sisters and I moved to Minneapolis. I finished school there, and then later we decided to get our own apartment.

My girlfriend and I were going to business college and we were rooming together. Harry was in the service in basic training, and he met my brother, Ben. Ben told Harry that when they got back to Minneapolis, he wanted him to meet his kid sister's roommate (I was the kid sister). So when they were in town, we met for dinner...the four of us. Harry was supposed to connect with my roommate, but it didn't work out that way. Later, Harry called me for a date, and I swear that he told me that this would be a double date. I agreed, only because it would be a double date. We went to the movies and I kept looking for my brother and his date to show up. They never did, and Harry claims to this day that he never said that it would be a double date. Well, we have now been married for 60 years so I guess it turned out all right.

When I myself became a mother, I was determined that my children would never throw the tantrums that I did. It worked on my son, Rick...all I had to do was to look or speak sternly to him...but it never worked on my daughter, Wendy. She was very defiant and determined. She would not have a tantrum, but she would continue to do what I didn't want her to do.

My family was devout Buddhists and I was raised that way. We always went to church. When Harry and I got married, I thought, "A Buddhist and Christian?" But we got married in the Fort Snelling chapel when Harry was in the service and a Christian chaplain married us. But we did not go to church because he went overseas. We later moved to Chicago where there were a lot of Pasadena people there. They decided that they wanted to start their own church, so that is when we started to go to church. We were charter members there. We would meet at the YMCA or any place they could find for us to congregate. I say I am Christian, but really, I'm not sure that I know enough about it because I was raised so strongly as a Buddhist. I do feel that both religions teach basically the same values of honesty, kindness, etc.

Mack Yamaguchi

Mack Yamaguchi

Mack Yamaguchi
June 13, 2005

I was born in 1919 in Watsonville, California on a strawberry farm. I was the third eldest of nine children, five boys and four girls. In Watsonville, we were sharecropping with other Japanese families...Japanese men and women would move into little farmhouses and would work on the farms while raising their families. We worked on the Shikuma ranch which became famous for their berries. My father and mother would tend the berries. We would grow the berries and they would sell it, and then we got a share of the profit. I was four or five years old and I remember those sharecropping days. I was there until 1932.

Then when I was about eight years old, we moved to the Cortez in the Central Valley. Cortez was started by a famous Japanese man named Abiko. Because Japanese in those days could not own land themselves, he set up a corporation so that he could purchase land. He bought up many acres in the dessert and then sold acres to the Japanese. Soon there were many Japanese farms, raising different crops such as grapes. Because the Japanese were not allowed to own land, they also formed corporations. In that way, the corporation could own the land, even though a Japanese could not. It was the way things were done. He sold land to my parents and we formed a corporation called YSD Company which stood for Yamaguchi, Sugira, Date Corporation. While a Caucasian man would be the trustee of the land, the Japanese were the real owners. We had to do it that way because of the law prohibiting Japanese from owning land.

We grew strawberries and tomatoes. Then eventually, there were so many families, we formed a Japanese cooperative called the Cortez Growers Associates. Then we started trucking our produce to the San Francisco markets. It was a profitable business.

When the war started, we were living in Cortez. Then one day we were told to park our car at the packing shed, bring all the belongings that we could carry, and a bus would come to pick us up. So we stood beside the packing shed and the army buses came and took us to a war camp in Merced. It was really the fairgrounds. In fact, we use to go this fairgrounds and display our peaches...and now we were in the same place, only it was the war camp instead of the fairgrounds. We were there about three months and then we were shipped out to Amache Camp in Colorado.

I was the sports editor at the Amache Camp and I broadcast the sports activities for the camp. I had a microphone and there were loudspeakers around because Amache was also a former fairground. I did this for about six months, but I wanted to leave camp and earn some money. I heard that there was a Japanese language school in Colorado...soldiers needing to learn how to speak Japanese so that they could go over and interrogate the Japanese prisoners...I went there to work in the kitchen...I washed dishes. Then I wanted to get out of there and do some fancier stuff. So I moved to Denver since my girlfriend Alice Sakamoto lived in Denver. I worked at a dime store called Kress. Alice and I were married.

After the war we came eventually to Pasadena. My brother in law lived across the street from us and he was a gardener. He encouraged me also to get into the gardening business and I did. It was a good business.

I was one of the first Japanese to buy a fancy truck for my gardening work. I could afford it and I wanted to have good things...a brand new truck and wanted to look decent. I guess I didn't look much like a Japanese gardener.

On the side, I also sold cars at Colliau Chevrolet and then I began to sell insurance to the Japanese-speaking Issei. So I set up the Mack Yamaguchi Insurance on Wilshire Boulevard. All the gardeners who wanted their trucks insured came to me. Eventually, I went into insurance and gave up the gardening business.

My grandfather and grandmother were Issei and came from Japan and landed in Hawaii and there they became Christians. My mother and father who were also born in Japan were also Christian. So I come from a strong Christian family. In Watsonville, I went to church every Sunday. In Cortez, I was active in church.

We came to Pasadena around 1951 and attended the Kensington church. There were about 150 members. I remember the wonderful Christian Issei man who was pastor, Rev. Kokubun. Then there was Rev. Don Toriumi who was the young Nisei pastor. Don was just like one of us. We both liked to go fishing. He would give sermons which just moved me, and I would cry...he just grabbed us like that. I remember when the church had to move because of the freeway coming through. We didn't like it, but if we had to move, we had to move. So the big thing was getting a down payment on the new church, so everyone gave. The Issei and the Japanese gardeners really helped in raising enough money.

I have been a member of this church since the time we were located on Kensington Place in Pasadena, before the 210 Freeway displaced us and brought us here to Altadena. People know me as the greeter. Nobody asked me to do this...to greet people as they came to worship on Sunday. I just decided that this was an important thing to do - to make people feel welcome here.

What happened was that one day, a person I knew came to church. He was a doctor and he also was a member of the Lion's Club which I belonged to also. Later, he told me that he had come to worship at our church, but he was not coming back. I asked him why. He said because not one person came up to him and said hello. He felt that he was not wanted here, so he said that he would not return.

I felt very bad about that. I thought that maybe we were not doing a good job of welcoming people here, especially the visitors. So I took that responsibility myself. I started to hang around the entry of the church on Sunday mornings, and if no one was there to officially greet the people, I did. At first, I might have been too enthusiastic and made people a little nervous. But I toned it down myself, and just made sure that I

greeted each person with a smile and with hospitality. I ended up doing this for about 20 years. I had to retire last year because of health issues.

I would like to tell the younger generation to always respect your parents, and never dirty the name of your family. Be righteous and people will like you for it. And church life is very important. One word from the preacher's mouth can change your whole life.

Kiyo Yamate

KIYO YAMATE
(February 7, 2005)

My parents were Buddhist so I started out in the Buddhist Church. But I could not understand the Priest because I did not speak Japanese fluently. Then I went to a Christian church on Wall Street and Ninth Street in Los Angeles. But at that time it did not dawn on me about religion. I was not attending consistently...missed a Sunday here and there. In high school, I ran around with a girl who was Catholic, but at the Catholic church, everything was said in Latin, so that did not help me either.

After high school, from 1937 to 1939, I worked in a produce market on Ninth Street. I was a driver, and helped sell produce. I worked for a Japanese fellow. Once I had pneumonia and they wanted me to go out to the country to pick up a load, but I couldn't because I was sick, so I quit. Then I went to the wholesale Banana House. At that time bananas were rationed and my boss was bootlegging bananas from Texas. My boss was an Italian, named Sam. He lived across the street from the Altadena Golf Course.

Then the war. I was drafted on January 7, 1942. I was one of the last ones to be drafted before they quit taking Japanese into the Army. I still had no direction on my religion. I was stationed in Wyoming. In January, it was real cold...so cold that my hands would stick to the truck's steering wheel, and if I pulled them away too fast, some of my skin got pulled off.

Then I was sent to Fort Riley, Kansas. This was calvary training. The Japanese Americans were put into that camp to do menial labor...cut weeds, officer's helpers, etc. We had very little rankings until the 442nd began. They divided us into 15 persons which was the cadre of the 442nd. First I was a Private and then I jumped to Mortar Sergeant. Later, I was the Supply Sergeant. So I did not have to do a lot of the physical training that others had to do.

Japanese Americans from Hawaii did not have rank. But American Japanese did. Dan Inouye was one from Hawaii.

I had very little religious inclination at Fort Riley. I was a Supply Sergeant and not on the front line. But then there were those who saw combat...the story is altogether different for them. They say that there is no atheist in a fox hole. When you are getting shelled, you pray. They use to shell us way behind the line. Once, I was with the kitchen train and the Germans got that place zeroed in. While I was in one end of a building, the entire other side of the building got blown away. One of my helpers dug a fox hole, which is a couple feet deep. When they began to shell us, he would jump into the fox hole. When you are in a fox hole and you are getting shelled, it is a lonely experience. You never forget it. That is when I started to believe in God.

In the town of Carrara in Italy, where they make marble, I gave my candy rations to a person and when I got ready to leave, he wanted me to take home a big piece of marble, bigger than a television set. It was too big for me to take home. I asked for a marble ashtray instead...I don't know what happened to that ashtray.

But I think God had another mission for me. He kept me from getting wounded during combat. I was one of the few people who did not get hurt. When I came back, Sam, my employer, asked me and my wife to stay with him. Mitzi was one of the first in Pasadena to come back. We also had my oldest son who was around two years old. When I came back, I had a problem with the Teamsters Local 630. When I had left for the war, I had a withdrawal card from the union which would allow me back into the union when I returned. So when I came back and asked the union for my union book, they refused me. Sam, my former employer, would have let me work without the union book, but I did not want Sam to get into trouble with the union. So I went to the draft board on Sixth Street and Main. They sent me to a lawyer. My lawyer and I went down to the union. He told them that if they don't give me back my union book, we will fight them in court. The union did not want any trouble. They called a meeting amongst themselves. Then later they said I could come back in. Once I got back in, they could not keep out other Japanese. So I broke the color line...so to speak. Gradually, people then began to come back to the produce business. Whenever Sam needed a worker, I would bring in a Japanese American. So I think God gave me that issue to come back and help my fellow Americans.

When Reverend Toriumi was on Kensington Place, we became involved in this church. We use to go to Bible study. Then when Reverend Mannock came, I really enjoyed the Bible studies. My wife and I and my oldest son were baptized by Reverend Toriumi. The church at that time was pretty friendly. It was homier...more friendly on Kensington.

We are not close to the new people now. I am limited in my ability to go places. Before it seemed like we got together more and we looked after each other more. I think the church is getting away. It's separated...old and new.

I might be selfish but I am saying that the older people need the younger people to help them with their daily lives. I'm not talking about myself because we have family to depend on right now. We depend on my niece who is a RN at the Huntington Hospital...she comes be once or twice per week to see that we are okay and that we are taking our medication. I have to use a wheelchair to shop now, but I can still do things. My son and daughter-in-law help us. The church should have some kind of program to help those people who need assistance, who are not able to get out or to care for themselves.

As far as the Issei and Niesi generation, I think that most Sansei and Younsei don't comprehend what the Issei and Niesi went through to give them their good life. Most

Sansei went through college. But most of the Nisei did not have that opportunity...they didn't have the money or they had to help out the family. If they don't appreciate what the Nisei went through for their kids, I feel sorry for them...They take things for granted. Everything they got, someone suffered for it. Issei came to this country, they could not speak the language. They did the best they could. Nisei really did a good job of raising their kids. And I hope the Sansei and Younsei appreciate what the Nisei did.

The "Go For Broke" monument is in the middle of the block, around Alameda and First Street and Temple Street. "Go for Broke" was our motto...like when you are gambling and you build up a pile of money, and you decide to gamble it all on the next roll of the dice...then you "go for broke."

The monument is made out of black granite and it is 40 feet in diameter, in a semi circle or half moon. The front is down towards the ground. The back is 9 feet up. It has pillars. One is the Congressional Metal of Honor. On the back, 16,000+ names are on the marker...the criteria to be on the marker was that you served overseas in World War II. There are Caucasian names on it, but mostly Japanese. The KIA's (Killed in Action) are also designated. The front of the monument slopes up, and that represents the hills of Italy. When we went up the hills, the Germans were looking down our throats. .

I was involved in the fund-raising for this monument. I also served on the Board of Governors for the building of this monument. There was controversy about whether the monument should just be for those killed in action, or for anyone who served overseas in WWII. We decided finally that it should be for all those served overseas.